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Saipan Humane Society helped 3,391 pets in 2023. PAGE 3

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

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THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 11

www.saipantribune.com | TUESDAY JANUARY 16, 2024 | www.facebook.com/saipantribune

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Honolulu Homeland Security Investigations special agent in charge John F. Tobon shared that human trafficking has become prevalent in communities across the Pacific and hopes that more of these communities join DHS' Blue Campaign which aims to raise awareness and support victims and survivors of human trafficking.

DHS says human trafficking prevalent in our communities

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

Unfortunately, human trafficking is prevalent in our communities, according to Honolulu Homeland Security Investigations special agent in charge John F. Tobon.

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$1.4M from IPI auctions ready to be disbursed to creditors

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

The company that's auctioning off some properties of Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC has amassed over $1.4 million from the auctions it has already held and is now ready to disburse the money to some of IPI's creditors.

Clear Management Ltd., through attorney Michael White, informed the U.S. District Court for the NMI last week that it has earned over

See IPI on Page 4

Rep. Camacho's assault trial begins next month

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

The bench trial for Rep. Vicente Camacho (D-Saipan) is set to begin next month where he is expected to take the stand along with 12 other defense witnesses.

The bench trial for Camacho, who is accused of brutally beating Steven Koch back in October 2021, is set to begin on Feb. 8, at 9am before Superior Court Associate Judge Kenneth Govendo.

Camacho

Based on the defense's witness list, Camacho is expected to take the stand during his trial along with 12 other defense witnesses.

According to court documents, Camacho, 61, and co-defendant Teipo Nikiti, 21, are accused of assaulting Koch and are facing charges of assault and battery and

See TRIAL on Page 4

House passes bill to impose tax increase on construction activities

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The House of Representatives passed on Friday a bill that seeks to impose an additional 3% tax on the yearly gross revenue of construction activities in excess of $250,000.

With 16 House members voting "yes" and only Rep. Thomas John Dela Cruz Manglona (R-Saipan) voting "no" during a session, House Bill 23-74, House Draft 1, passed the lower chamber and now goes to the Senate for action.

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FERDIE DE LA TORRE

House of Representatives Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan) confers with House legal counsel Joseph Taijeron during recess of a session last Friday. Among the bills that the House passed that day was a legislation to impose an additional 3% tax on the yearly gross revenue of construction activities in excess of $250,000.

ADVANCING THE COMMONWEALTH'S INTERESTS AT THE PENTAGON

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, center, together with Commonwealth Ports Authority board chair Jose Ayuyu, right, are seen here entering the U.S. Pentagon last week for a series of meetings with high level officials at the Department of Defense to discuss infrastructure development, regional security, and economic initiatives. On the left is Karim Farish, director of Intergovernmental Affairs, who assisted in coordinating the DoD meetings. Palacios' travel to the nation's capital, which included other leaders from different federal agencies and military branches, was funded through a federally sourced grant.

CNMI OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR/

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Hyatt Regency Saipan's legendary poolside bar is looking forward to welcome back all guests each weekend from 11:30am to 8pm.
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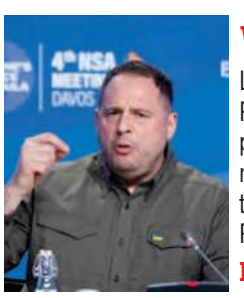

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Local

DeLeon Guerrero: Flores spinning lies; teaching how to be a social media bully

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The word war between Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) and Rep. Marissa Renee Flores (Ind-Saipan) has come to a boiling point, with DeLeon Guerrero giving a cautionary word to a younger generation that is watching Flores spin her lies as an elected official.

HIGH-LEVEL MEETING CNMI OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, together with Commonwealth Ports Authority board chair Jose "Joe" Ayuyu, met with Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) to discuss a range of issues including port enhancement projects and infrastructure development. Murkowski is a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, ranking member of the Interior-Environment Subcommittee, member of Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee, and vice chairman of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee. Palacios was in Washington, D.C. last week for a series of meetings with senior leaders from federal and military agencies.

"It's not a good role model at all—teaching our young generation to lie and be a social media bully," said DeLeon Guerrero when asked for comments about Flores' statements during the House of Representatives session on Friday.

» 'Some lawmakers too fixated on former governor'

In that session, Flores questioned why 45 bills have been sitting idle in the Senate for almost a year now. "I'm not sure why that is, whether it's because one person feels that she should hold it," Flores had said.

DeLeon Guerrero

Flores also shared her response to DeLeon Guerrero's previous comments about the alleged hatred and vindictiveness behind her (Flores') bills.

When asked about Flores' statements, the Senate president said Flores blaming her again about her tax bills is "sadly filled with lies."

DeLeon Guerrero said Flores then proceeds to comment on Senate Fiscal Affairs Committee chair Sen. Donald M. Manglona (Ind-Rota) for scheduling a public hearing on tax bills.

"Well, my dear Rep. Marissa, I am not holding any of your bills. It has been sitting in the Senate Fiscal Affairs Committee," she said.

The Senate president noted that her memorandum to the Senate Fiscal Affairs Committee instructed it to conduct public hearings, "which is the right thing to do on all the tax bills."

DeLeon Guerrero said she has all the memos she issued when withdrawing bills from committees and that, in fact, some bills were withdrawn at the request of committee chairs themselves.

"One thing is certain: They are so fixated on former governor Ralph DLG Torres, forgetting that the bill they are pushing for passage will affect every living citizen in the CNMI," she said.

DeLeon Guerrero also accused some lawmakers of launching political attacks and lies, forgetting why they are there, which is to defend and protect the U.S. Constitution and CNMI laws.

She said it is "really sad and alarming" that elected officials will initiate dangerous legislation that will violate a person's constitutional rights. "Scary and dangerous to society. There is no justice in such proposed legislation," the Senate president said.

DeLeon Guerrero said Flores and other lawmakers purport to speak and spread love, but that's not how anyone would describe their "relentless attacks" against her.

Flores had stated during the House session that her House Bill 23-22 that was supported by House members is under attack by the Office of the Public Defender and other private citizens.

House Bill 23-22 seeks to grant the attorney general powers to issue subpoena. The House passed the bill and it is now before a Senate committee.

Flores said her bill is gaining momentum and support by the attorney general and other members and private citizens of the CNMI community.

"I do believe that everyone has an opinion and I can respect that. …What I don't understand, however, is how in the world the Senate has 40 bills since last year—45 to be exact since last year—sitting in the Senate for a year, almost a year already," she said.

Flores

Luckily, Flores said, their colleague from the Senate Fiscal Affairs Committee has scheduled a meeting to attend to five bills that are aimed to increase revenue funds.

She said the House is doing its job; what's holding it up is the Senate. "I would hope that the Senate will somehow figure out a way to place these bills on calendar to be heard on the floor," Flores said.

She took particular exception to DeLeon Guerrero's comments on her bill, H.B. 23-22—that lawmakers should be concerned when individual constitutional rights are at a great risk of being violated through "legislation that is driven without sound mind but with such hatred and vindictiveness…"

Her response to that, Flores said, is to say that "when faced with hatred and vindictiveness, responding with love can be a transformative force."

"It promotes understanding, empathy and compassion. So by choosing to respond with love, over hatred, we can break the cycle of negativity and foster a more harmonious and inclusive society. Because now in a world full of hatred and vindictiveness, it is crucial to spread the message of love," she said.

Saipan Humane Society helped 3,391 pets in 2023

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Since the official formation of the Saipan Humane Society early last year, they, along with their many partners and volunteer-veterinarians, have assisted 3,391 pets in the CNMI.

Of that number, 1,800 doses of flea/tick preventive medicines were dispensed, over 1,200 vaccines were administered, and SHS had over 600 sick and wound care visits.

What stands out the most to SHS executive director Lauren Cabrera is that those numbers in the span of just a year only means "people love their pets in the CNMI."

"The sheer number of pets in need of care, and pet owners wanting animal healthcare services, was truly astounding. We are working hard to build capacity and expand services so we can truly meet the needs of the community, while also ensuring that our services are affordable and our clinic remains sustainable," she said.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Guam Animals in Need director Alison Hadley briefs Dog Control Program and SHS staff on the upcoming training in Guam.

The year's highlight, said Cabrera, is and will always be "saving lives against all odds despite having limited resources and no on-island veterinarian, Cabrera said.

Just last week, she said, a dog was brought into the clinic "unable to move, on the verge of death. We got to work trying to save him. A few days later, he walked into [the] clinic wagging his tail."

Cabrera is joined by clinic manager/vet tech Ruby Ma, Lupe Ingham, and Jehn Villagomez, at the clinic SHS is operating out of the Saipan Mayor's Office Dog Shelter in As Perdido. They work hand-in-hand with the Saipan Mayor Office's Dog Control Program staff and occasionally fly down vets from Guam or the U.S. mainland for much needed spay/neuter clinics.

She thanked the DCP, which she said have been with them since before Saipan Humane Society even existed. "The partnership we have built with DCP has allowed us to get this organization off the ground so we can better serve the community. They are hands-on helping in the spay/neuter clinics, and we work together on certain things in the animal shelter. Without the support of our Mayor [Ramon "RB" Camacho] and DCP, I'm not sure that SHS would exist as we know it!"

Additionally, she thanks their "amazing tireless staff and board. It has been a very challenging year, building this organization from the ground up and moving ahead at warp speed. We were all full-time volunteers for many months. It is incredible to see the growth, and we only hope to keep growing! We would also like to thank our clients. We know it is not always smooth or easy, but we appreciate them sticking with us as we rapidly build this organization to help their pets."

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Saipan Humane Society staff Lupe Attao, left, and Ruby Ma vaccinate a puppy at the clinic located in the Saipan Mayor's Office Animal Shelter in As Perdido.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

SHS Clinic director Ruby Ma cuddles some patients.

Former Commerce chief Dela Cruz nominated to MPLT board

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Acting governor David M. Apatang has nominated former Department of Commerce secretary Pedro Q. Dela Cruz to serve as a member of the Marianas Public Land Trust board of trustees.

If confirmed by the Senate, Dela Cruz will represent Rota and will serve the unexpired term of Vianney B. Hocog, which will expire on Jan. 9, 2028.

Apatang informed Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) on Thursday that he and Gov. Arnold I. Palacios have complete confidence in Dela Cruz's ability to devote his time and efforts to the best interests of the people.

"We believe that his membership on this board is essential to ensure consistency and continuity in fulfilling the goals and objectives of the Marianas Public Land Trust," the acting governor said.

Apatang also told Dela Cruz that he and Palacios are confident that he is qualified and will be an asset to the MPLT board.

Dela Cruz also served before as vice chair for the NMI Retirement Fund board of trustees.

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
P.O. Box 10007 I Saipan, MP 96950 I Phone: (670)488-1710
Email: cnmiswdb@dol.gov.mp

VISION: *"To integrate a seamless workforce development system that meets the needs of employers, job-seekers, workers, and youths in order to supply quality employees for the dynamic economy of the CNMI."*

In accordance with Public Law 8-41, Section 11(a), the CNMI State Workforce Development Board hereby gives notice that it will hold its Program Year (PY) 2023 3rd Quarter General Membership meeting on Thursday, January 18, 2024 from 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM at the Hyatt Regency Chamolinian Room.

AGENDA

I. Call to Order
II. Roll Call
III. Review & Adoption of Agenda of January 18, 2024
IV. Review & Adoption of Meeting Minutes of December 21, 2023
V. Public Comments
VI. New Business
  a. CNMI 2024-2027 WIOA Unified State Plan
VII. Announcements
VIII. Next Meeting
IX. Adjournment

/s/ Velma Ann Palacios, Chairperson

ACCOMMODATIONS
Individuals who require accommodations are requested to contact the Department of Labor Workforce Investment Agency at (670) 488-1720 at least 72 hours prior to the meeting in order to ensure the availability of the requested accommodation.

PUBLIC COMMENTS
The public is welcome to comment on any agenda item. Public comments may be made by:
- Email to cnmiswdb@dol.gov.mp an hour before the meeting start time. The subject line shall identify the date of the meeting followed by the agenda item being addressed.
- Oral testimonies in-person at the meeting.

Timely submission of public comments will be read aloud during the public comment segment of the agenda and made available to the public in compliance with Public Law 8-41.

This publication is supported by the Employment and Training Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor as part of Program Year 2021 award totaling $1,537,732 with 0 percent financed from non-governmental sources.

MISSION: *"Empowering, integrating, implementing, and innovating the workforce needs of the CNMI."*

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NOTICE OF REGULAR MEETING

The Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA) Board of Directors hereby gives notice that a regular meeting is being called on Friday, January 19, 2024, at 9:30 a.m. in the Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF) Classroom at the Airport Fire Station located at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport on the island of Saipan. The following items are on the agenda for the above-referenced meeting:

AGENDA

I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS
1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Adoption of Agenda
4. Adoption of Minutes

II. PUBLIC COMMENT(S)
III. CORRESPONDENCES
IV. COMMITTEE REPORTS
1. Financial Affairs Committee (with Grants and Internal Audit Report)
  a. Puti'on Saipan
2. Airport Facilities Committee
3. Seaport Facilities Committee
4. Personnel Affairs Committee

V. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT
1. Grant Department
2. CPA Reorganization

VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT
VII. OLD BUSINESS
1. Contract Management Desk Audit/Performance Audit
2. Rota Ports Manager Employment Contract
3. Supplemental Budget Request: Port of Saipan Harbor Patrol Truck
4. Bridge Investment Group Lease

VIII. NEW BUSINESS
1. DFS Lease Extension
2. Sick Leave Donation Amendments
3. Position Description: Safety Officer/Quality Control Specialist
4. Supplemental Budget Request: Port of Saipan Sports Utility Vehicle
5. Supplemental Budget Request: Runway Paint

IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION
a. Accounts Receivables: Delinquent Accounts

X. MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS
1. Tinian Airport Name- Legislative Action

XI. ADJOURNMENT

All interested persons are welcome to attend and to submit written or oral testimony on the agenda items. A time limit may be imposed. Video conferencing is available via Zoom. ZOOM LINK: Meeting ID: 898 0318 0837 Passcode: 573227

JOSE C. AYUYU
Chairman, Board of Directors
JANUARY 14, 2024

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
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Pursuant to P.L. 8-41, Section 11, Governor Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Governor David M. Apatang, through the Health Care Professions Licensing Board (HCPLB) hereby gives notice that it will hold its regular monthly board meeting on Wednesday, January 17, 2024, at 8 a.m. on Saipan. The meeting will be held at the Board of Professional Licensing Conference Room, BPL Building on Capitol Hill.

AGENDA

I. Meeting Call to Order
II. Determination of Quorum
III. Review and Adoption of Agenda
IV. Review and Adoption of Minutes (12/20/2023)
V. Public Comments
VI. Chairperson's Report
VII. Director's Report
- Update Localgov online payment
- Financial Report

VIII. Investigator's Report
IX. Communications from the Governor's Office & Legislature
A. Governor's Office
B. Legislature
X. Old Business
XI. New Business
- Special Facility Permit

XII. Pending Applications for Board's Review
A. New Application
B. Renewal Application
XIII. Miscellaneous Business
XIV. Executive Session: The Board may vote to meet in executive session to consult with Counsel on pending or anticipated legal matters.
- Special Facility Permit

XV. Announcements
A. Next Meeting Date
B. Adjournment of Meeting

Propst says gov't always overspends

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

House of Representatives floor leader Rep. Edwin K. Propst (D-Saipan) said on Friday that it doesn't matter if the government has a $250-million or $100-million annual budget, it always overspends.

"And even the greatest year on the economy that we've ever seen. We see what? Deficit spending. It's ridiculous," said Propst during the miscellaneous portion of the House session.

He said it's the problem (overspending) that the CNMI has always faced and that something that he will be putting out next week about how the annual budget is gone up and down.

Propst said it's also ridiculous to talk about that the Legislature needs to find revenue-generating bills and when they come up with ideas, they're told that they are idiots that they shouldn't be doing this.

"What is the alternative? If you're talking about more cuts, we've already done cuts," he pointed out.

Propst said one of the first things that the Palacios-Apatang administration did was cutting the over 500 American Rescue Plan Act-funded employees.

"Now we didn't want to say that we wanted to cut them but there was no choice because there was no more ARPA money," he said.

The floor leader said now there's now talk about bringing back those 500 employees.

He said the government has no money for those 500 employees.

Propst said the sad thing is something that's going to come soon is when the government is going to run out of money where it won't be able to pay the 25% pension benefits for retirees.

Propst

"And when that day comes, what's going to be said? I can say without a doubt that my colleagues have done their best to try to find revenue-generating bills. And I support them as much as I hate to raise any taxes," he said.

Propst said the alternative was to raise the business gross revenue taxes which every business was opposed to.

"So, what is the alternative besides begging Uncle Sam for more money? That's my frustration," he said.

Propst asked House members that they have to be united on these generating-revenue bills.

"I've asked you this because what is the choice? We're going to go out there and tell the public that we don't have any revenue-generating bills? We do. We've done our best," he said.

Propst asked the public to help them by giving ideas instead of criticism.

"I'm open to it. My office is open. Everybody here, your office is open," he said.

Propst said they have to do something because to do nothing is an injustice to this Commonwealth.

He said he is deeply concerned for the retirees.

"If some of them that don't get that 25%, they are already barely surviving. It is critical that we continue that service," Propst said.

He said if the Legislature does not have any revenue-generating bills passed and none signed into law, then what more can they do?

"Cut more hours or cut more employees? Those are the alternatives. What do you want to do?" Propst said.

IPI

From page 1

$1.4 million from the seven auctions held to sell off IPI's gaming equipment and personal property.

In the notice of proposed distribution of IPI gaming equipment auction proceeds it filed with the district court, Clear Management stated that it accepted bids totaling $1,933,098 and has officially collected $1,879,703.00, including the amounts already collected from the latest auction.

It said Clear Management is now prepared to make distributions to consenting judgment creditors and the CNMI within 10 days of the court approving its notice.

The court is set to hear the matter on Jan. 18.

The consenting judgment creditors are; Joshua Gray, Winzy Corporation, USA Fanter Corp. Ltd., Kan Pacific, Art Man Environmental Corp., James Whang dba South Pacific Lumber Company, Tang's Corp., G4S, RC, Yu's LLC, Atkins Kroll, Dotts, Ecolab Guam, GT Buildings Systems International, Hermine Ipwan Island dba IPWAN Security Services, Fujitec Pacific Inc., Yantze Corp., and the CNMI government.

Although Clear Management has collected over $1.8 million in all from IPI auctions, Clear Management has about $1,460,000 to disburse to IPI's creditors due to commissions and expenses.

"Assuming that the seventh auction results are approved by the court, based on the $1,485,540 actually in the trust account today and the $22,319.90 in commissions and expenses already incurred, the limited receiver proposes that it is now appropriate to distribute $1,460,000 to the judgment creditors of IPI," said the notice.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

TRIAL

From page 1

disturbing the peace.

Camacho was arrested by the Department of Public Safety on the evening of Nov. 2, 2021, but he is out on a $1,250 bail.

Due to the alleged assault, Koch reportedly suffered abrasions, bruising, and pain in his head and body from the blows, and was taken to the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. for examination.

On Nov. 1, 2021 Koch, his wife and daughter asked the Superior Court to issue a temporary restraining order against Camacho, Nikiti, Ignacio "Ike" S. Concepcion, and Fiel Reynaldo Ortiz.

This was later granted, with Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho issuing a TRO and a one-year protective order against Camacho, Nikiti, Concepcion, and Ortiz.

The assault incident is believed to have stemmed from a longstanding animosity between Koch and his brother-in-law, Concepcion.

According to court documents, there had been animosity between Concepcion and his siblings, including Koch's wife, Magdalena Concepcion-Koch.

Camacho, who is also related to Concepcion, allegedly aligned himself with Concepcion, inserting himself in the family's feud.

On Oct. 29, 2021, Koch alleged that two altercations happened; one between him and Concepcion, and the other was the alleged beating led by Camacho.

DHS

From page 1

However, the U.S Department of Homeland Security is hoping to combat this epidemic through its Blue Campaign that aims to spread awareness about how to spot human trafficking instances, and who to report it to.

In a virtual interview with Tobon, he shared that Jan. 11 is Wear Blue Day which was established through the Blue Campaign which spreads awareness about human trafficking and shows support for victims and survivors of Human trafficking.

"Blue was chosen as the color in support of spreading awareness of anti-human trafficking efforts and to support victims of human trafficking. So once a year, DHS promotes Wear Blue Day around the world. Again, the color signifies our support for victims and survivors of human trafficking. The reason we started to promote Wear Blue Day and why the DHS started the Blue Campaign was to make sure that we had the public's input and interest as well as make people aware of the different kinds of activities where people, as part of their day-to-day lives, could encounter a victim of human trafficking," he said.

When asked the importance of promoting the campaign, Tobon said it;s because human trafficking, which takes form as labor trafficking and sex trafficking, has become prevalent in communities like the CNMI.

"Human trafficking in the U.S. primarily takes two forms; sex-trafficking or labor trafficking. Both are very prevalent in our communities and all throughout the United States," he said.

The goal of the Blue Campaign is to make communities, even as small as the CNMI, sensitive to human trafficking instances.

Some of the human trafficking schemes seen even in the CNMI, as per local news reports, are illicit massage parlors and instances where individuals are not paid their wages or are withheld wages.

These are schemes that DHS hopes to make the local community sensitive to in hopes that more incidences are reported as human trafficking is the largest unreported crime nation-wide.

"Our aim and goal is to make people more sensitive, and more aware of those kinds of conditions so we can also count on the general public to help us identify individuals that may need help and assistance. When we are talking about labor trafficking; instances where individuals are not paid what they're supposed to be paid, paid under the table, or people who work whose pay is withheld. Those are signs. Another sign is when you have individuals who are working but their travel documents are held by their employer, that's also a sign of labor trafficking. When it comes to things like sex trafficking, the most obvious one in our communities are illicit massage businesses. These are businesses where a massage is advertised but there is actual sex work going on in the businesses. That's a sign of both labor and sex trafficking," he said.

"These things are happening, and people are becoming aware of these activities but unfortunately that information is not getting to us. In many instances, that information does not get to us because people are unaware of instances that should be reported, or they do not know who to report it to. Unfortunately, these are one of the crimes that go largely unreported. The individuals that are being exploited and victimized as part of these schemes often are unable to report, or do not have the ability to report so the number of cases and number of instances are hard to pinpointed because it is one of the most underreported crimes that we have," he said.

For those who believe to be victims of human trafficking schemes in the CNMI, or may know a victim of these schemes, feel free to call DHS' tip line at 866-347-2423.

You may also contact the National Human Trafficking hotline at 888-373-7888

HOUSE

From page 1

Before the voting, House Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan) initially announced that he is going to refer the bill back to the Ways and Means Committee because Rep. Ralph N. Yumul, who is the main author of the legislation and chairs the committee, is apparently not ready to move it.

During a recess, Yumul stated that he did speak with the Senate counterpart and they're (senators) not ready to move with the bill because of some comments from the Saipan Chamber of Commerce about the bill that need to be addressed.

When the session was back, floor leader Rep. Edwin K. Propst (D-Saipan) withdrew his earlier motion to pass the bill and moved to recommit the legislation back to the Ways and Means Committee.

The motion to recommit the bill back to the Ways and Means Committee, however, was defeated, 12-5, and the bill was back on calendar.

During another recess, Rep. John Paul P. Sablan (Ind-Saipan) said they discussed this legislation in the conference committee and that he is surprised that Yumul is saying now that the senators are backing out.

"This is part of the critical discussion that we spoke about, that we vote out from the House all these tax bills for them for action. I'm a bit surprised that they're now saying the opposite," Sablan said.

Yumul said they have some response from the Saipan Chamber of Commerce opposing it and that he also got a verbal communication that the Office of the Delegate also opposed it.

"'I'm not sure, I may stand corrected on that because of how the bill was written. So that's why I'm holding it," Yumul said.

He said now if the House members disagree, they can vote it out and send it to the Senate and let them decide.

Yumul said he stands by his legislation and respects everybody's vote and decision.

Rep. Blas Jonathan T. Attao (Ind-Saipan) said they spoke about this bill since earlier last year.

"The importance of this legislation is not at tomorrow. It was yesterday. Because the tax period happens in January," Attao said.

He said the reason why they agreed to the 3% tax even during the conference committee is to allow the beneficiaries of Tinian and Rota districts to impose an additional 2% tax in all the projects that are happening within their senatorial districts, that they can create some local revenues within their senatorial districts.

"So, I don't understand why now the Senate's position might be to hold on tax legislation. As a matter of fact, there's a few tax legislations that are sitting in the Senate right now that they could act on. Unfortunately, they chose not to," Attao said.

He said that doesn't mean that the House should wait for the Senate to take action on certain legislations.

"So, let's move on. I think it's been here for far too long," Attao said.

Reps. Vicente C. Camacho (D-Saipan) and Vincent Seman Aldan (Ind-Saipan) raised some questions about the bill. Attao and some House members answered them.

Propst stated there are things need to be clarified if they're going to debate the bill that day.

"Because like so many other bills that we deal with, there are misunderstandings and things are misconstrued and somebody takes it and turns it upside down," Propst said.

He said clarity is important right now because people are so upset about any taxes going forward.

Propst said the fact of the matter is, the CNMI is suffering right now and the Legislature does not have any revenue-generating bills moving forward, generating money.

After the discussions, House members then voted to pass the bill.

KZMI 103.9 donates $10K to NMC Foundation

Radio station KZMI 103.9 recently donated $10,000 worth of radio advertisements to the Northern Marianas College Foundation to help with its marketing efforts for their upcoming Golf Open in March 2024.

"Supporting the Northern Marianas College Foundation and its vital mission to enhance higher education in the Commonwealth is a source of pride for us at KZMI 103.9," KZMI general manager Bob Webb said. "As the upcoming tournament comes near, we extend our best wishes to all participating players."

NMC's tournament will be a two-day event and the tournament fee for the 2024 golf open is $250.

"We are grateful for KZMI's continuing support of the college," said Ben Babauta, chairperson of the NMC Foundation. "We extend our heartfelt gratitude for their valuable contribution, which plays a significant role in advancing our mission."

NMC

Radio Station KZMI 103.9 recently donated $10,000 worth of radio advertisements to the Northern Marianas College Foundation to help promote its upcoming Golf Open in March 2024. In photo the is KZMI general manager Bob Webb.

The tournament, which is also the signature event of the NMC Foundation, aims to raise funds to build and equip modern, innovative campus facilities that will help expand the CNMI's workforce development efforts, stimulate economic growth, and provide access to quality education for the residents of the CNMI.

Interested companies and individuals who would like to help the college with its rebuilding efforts can donate educational tax credit, cash, or in-kind contributions by visiting www.marianas.edu/golf or by contacting Helen Camacho at helen.camacho@marianas.edu, Raynard Travilla at raynard.travilla@marianas.edu, or Miguel Dandan at miguel.dandan@marianas.edu.

Golfers who would like to register for the upcoming tournament can also visit www.marianas.edu/golf. Only online payments are accepted for this upcoming golf open.

For more updates, follow Northern Marianas College on Facebook and Instagram (nmc.proa) or visit www.marianas.edu. ***(NMC)***

Radewagen highlights discussion on Pacific healthcare initiative's role in regional diplomacy

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Delegate Uifa'atali Amata Radewagen (R-A. Samoa) is highlighting a health care role in U.S. considerations of diplomatic endeavors in the Pacific region.

"American Samoa, and in this case many others of the Pacific Islands, face substantial geographic and economic challenges, especially in the field of health care," said Radewagen.

"In the vast Pacific, even nearby neighbors are accessible only by a flight or ocean-capable ferry. Health care throughout the region presents obvious challenges, and while there is no easy solution, a future can be envisioned of regional hub facilities backed by excellent telehealth capabilities. I have high hopes for the future of American Samoa's health capabilities, and the U.S. has an interest in healthcare efforts throughout the region as part of U.S. commitments to facilitate partnerships. As it happens, each of my three congressional committees includes aspects of these discussions through the Foreign Affairs Committee, the Natural Resources Committee encompassing policy for the Freely Associated States and three U.S. territories in the Pacific, and the Veterans' Affairs Committee serving our many island U.S. veterans as they seek to access their U.S. care and benefits despite not living near VA hospitals. I look forward to continuing discussions about these important issues and ongoing efforts to show U.S. commitment to the Pacific and our unending commitment to our U.S. veterans everywhere," she added.

Radewagen

This article highlighting a U.S. approach on these topics is developed by the Center for Australian, New Zealand and Pacific Studies, which is part of the Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. ***(PR)***

Coast Guard, partners responding to 2 grounded vessels off coast of Maui

HONOLULU, Hawaii—The U.S. Coast Guard continues to respond to vessels that ran aground near Lahaina, Maui on Monday and Sugar Beach, Maui on Tuesday.

The 52-foot sailing vessel *Altego II* ran aground near the entrance to Lahaina Harbor at 12:20pm last Monday; good Samaritans were able to rescue eight people from the vessel.

The 85-foot motor vessel *Chaparral* ran aground on Sugar Beach, Maui on Tuesday morning; local authorities arrived on scene and confirmed there were no individuals onboard at the time. The vessel owner was unable to take appropriate action, and the vessel hull became breached early Wednesday morning, resulting in sheening in the water.

"We are working with the vessel owners, who are responsible for taking appropriate actions to mitigate any pollution threats from these vessels; if the owners are not able or are unwilling, then the Coast Guard is able to step in and support the state and county with use of federal funds to remove the pollution, and later seek reimbursement from the owner," said Cmdr. Kristen Hahn, Sector Honolulu Response department head. "Any operations to remove pollution, owner-led or government-led, can take up to several days to coordinate, to ensure work is conducted appropriately and does not cause further damage to the environment. We, along with our state and local partners, are committed to ensuring the safety of the owners, contractors and public while continuing to safeguard our critical environmental resources."

USCG

Sailing vessel *Altego II* aground near Lahaina, Maui. The *Altego II* ran aground near Lahaina, Maui last Jan. 8.

The Coast Guard opened a federal funding source at approximately 8:15am last Jan. 10 to federalize the case. Contractors arrived on Maui at 2:30pm and commenced operations to remove petroleum products and batteries from the vessel.

The Coast Guard will continue to ensure all pollution threats are removed from both vessels, and coordinate with the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources for oversight of salvage operations. ***(USCG)***

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ATTORNEY FOR Plaintiff

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

DONALD BUFTON, Plaintiff, -v- SAMUEL RAYBURN, Defendant.] CIVIL ACTION NO. 04-0043

TWELFTH AMENDED NOTICE OF SALE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, pursuant to a Writ of Execution issued by the Court in this matter on October 12, 2007, I will sell, at public auction, to the highest bidder, on the terms and conditions set forth hereinbelow, all of the right, title, and interest of Defendant in and to the following property:

Legal description of the property:
Lot no. 012 B 08, situated in Calabera, Saipan Northern Mariana Islands, containing 39,297 square meters, more or less, as more particularly described on Drawing/Cadastral Plat no. 012 B 01, which was registered with the Land Registry as Document no. 1466 on the 15th of March, 1972.

Total area of the property:
39,297 square meters

Known encumbrances:
The interest to be sold is a fully-prepaid leasehold interest which expires on May 31, 2042. There are no other known valid encumbrances materially affecting title.

Date, Time, and Place of Sale. The Sale will be held on Friday, February 16, 2024, at the hour of 1:30 p.m., at The Law Offices of Michael A. White, LLC, Joeten Center, Susupe, Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands. The sale will be open to the general public. Copies of a title insurance report for the properties are available to any prospective bidder upon request.

Terms and Conditions of Sale. The Terms and Conditions of Sale may be obtained from the undersigned, either prior to or at the sale. These terms and conditions shall govern the conduct of the sale.

DATED, this 8th day of January, 2024:

/s/
MICHAEL A. WHITE, Auctioneer

18TH CNMI STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Friday, January 19, 2024, at 9:00 a.m.
Board of Education Conference Room
Building 1241, Capitol Hill, Saipan
Via Zoom (see link below)

REGULAR BOARD MEETING

Agenda[1]

I. Preliminary
1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Election of Officers
4. Adoption of Agenda

II. Public Comments[2]

III. Reports
1. Chair's Report
2. Committee Reports
   a. CIP
   b. FPA
   c. ISA
   d. LIA
   e. SICPP
   f. SARC
   g. Internal Auditor
   h. Student Representative
3. Commissioner of Education
   a. Financial Status Reports
      i. Federal
      ii. Local
   b. Head Start Program
   c. Others

IV. Unfinished Business
1. Final FY 2022 Audit Report
2. FY 2024 Revised Budget
3. American Rescue Plan (ARP) Implementation Plan

V. New Business
1. Head Start/Early Head Start Program
   a. One-Time Program Improvement Funds: Facility and Furniture
   b. One-Time Program Improvement Funds: Training
2. Early Intervention Program, Part C, Annual Performance Report
3. Proclamations:
   a. Pupil Transportation Week
   b. Counselors Week
   c. Career Technical Education (CTE) Month
4. Proposed Amendments to Regulation 60-20
5. Certification & Licensure Matters
   a. CLO Report No. 2023-18-08
   b. CLO Report No. 2023-18-09
   c. Proposed Amendments to Certification Regulations

VI. Executive Session[3]
1. Legal Counsel's Report
2. Personnel
3. Other matters

VII. Miscellaneous

VIII. Discussion of Agenda for next Board Meeting

IX. Adjournment

[1]Join Zoom Meeting
https://zoom.us/j/92068294558?pwd=TDhpRVBVWkI1cWNGaEUxUnIlb1VPZz09
Meeting ID: 920 6829 4558
Passcode: 280235

[2]Pursuant to BOE Policy 0415, public comments are limited to 30 minutes. We ask that remarks be limited to 3 minutes each. Everyone is welcome to submit written comments.

[3]Pursuant to 1 CMC § 9912, the Board may vote to meet in executive session at any time.

CUC revises scheduled power service interruptions for Jan.

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. would like to inform the general public of a revised schedule for the power service interruptions. The original scheduled interruptions for Tuesday, Jan. 16, 2024, have been canceled until further notice, and Thursday, Jan. 25, 2023, has been rescheduled for Saturday, Jan. 20, 2024. See additional information below:

Friday, Jan. 12, 2024
Power Service Interruption Time: 8:30am-2:30pm
■ Area(s) Affected: San Antonio (Guili St.)
■ Water Wells Affected: None
■ Wastewater Facilities Affected: None
■ Traffic Light(s) Affected: None
■ Purpose: To allow the CUC linemen to replace two 45-foot concrete poles with 40-foot concrete poles and replace a 45-foot wooden power pole with a 40-foot concrete pole.

Wednesday, Jan. 17, 2024
Power Service Interruption Time: 8:30am-2:30pm
■ Area(s) Affected: Afetnas (Palos Ln.)
■ Water Wells Affected: None
■ Wastewater Facilities Affected: None
■ Traffic Light(s) Affected: None
■ Purpose: To allow the CUC linemen to replace three 45-foot concrete poles with 40-foot concrete poles.

Thursday, Jan. 18, 2024
Power Service Interruption Time: 8:30am-2:30pm
■ Area(s) Affected: San Antonio
■ Water Wells Affected: None
■ Wastewater Facilities Affected: None
■ Traffic Light(s) Affected: None
Momentary Power Service Interruption Time: 8:30am-9:00am and 2pm to 2:30pm
■ Area(s) Affected: San Antonio (Francisco M. Sablan Middle School and San Antonio Headstart)
■ Water Well(s) Affected: None
■ Wastewater Facilities Affected: None
■ Traffic Light(s) Affected: None
■ Purpose: To allow the CUC linemen to replace three 45-foot concrete poles with 40-foot concrete poles and replace two 45-foot wooden power poles with 40-foot concrete poles.

Saturday, Jan. 20, 2024
Power Service Interruption Time: 8:30am-2:30pm
■ Area(s) Affected: Northern Marianas College, Joeten Housing, and Fina Sisu
■ Water Wells Affected: NMC Water Tank/Reservoir, As Terlaje Booster Station and Chlorine Station
■ Wastewater Facilities Affected: W-8
■ Traffic Light(s) Affected: None
■ Purpose: To allow the CUC linemen to replace a 45-foot wooden power pole with a 40-foot concrete pole and reinstall a transformer.

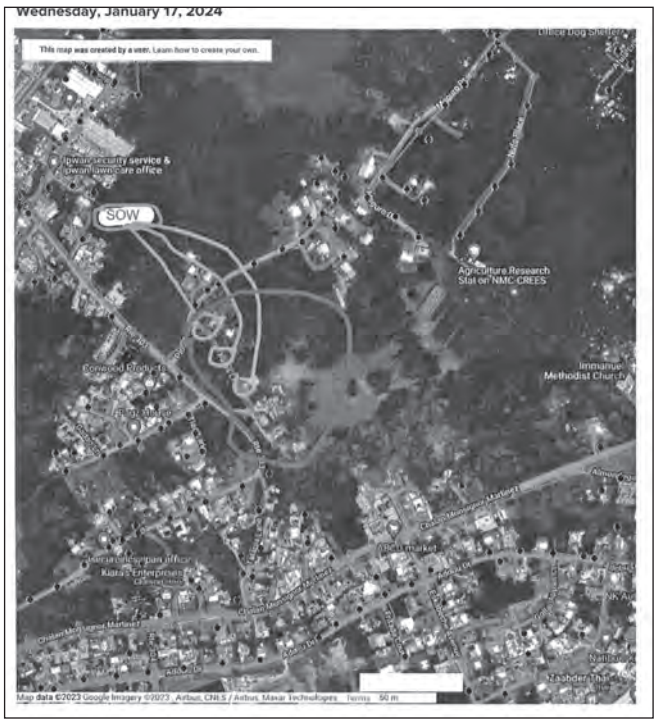
Tuesday, Jan. 23, 2024
Power Service Interruption Time: 8:30am-12:30pm
■ Area(s) Affected: Chalan Laulau (IT&E building) and Garapan (Fiesta barracks and former Nam Dae Moon Restaurant)
■ Water Well(s) Affected: None
■ Wastewater Facilities Affected: None
■ Traffic Light(s) Affected: None
■ Purpose: To allow the CUC linemen to replace two 40-foot wooden power poles with concrete poles and reinstall transformers, respectively.

Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2024
Power Service Interruption Time: 8:30am-2:30pm
■ Area(s) Affected: Gualo Rai (BECQ building)
■ Water Wells Affected: None
■ Wastewater Facilities Affected: None
■ Traffic Light(s) Affected: None
Purpose: To allow the CUC linemen to replace a 40-foot wooden primary pole with a 40-foot concrete pole and reinstall a transformer.

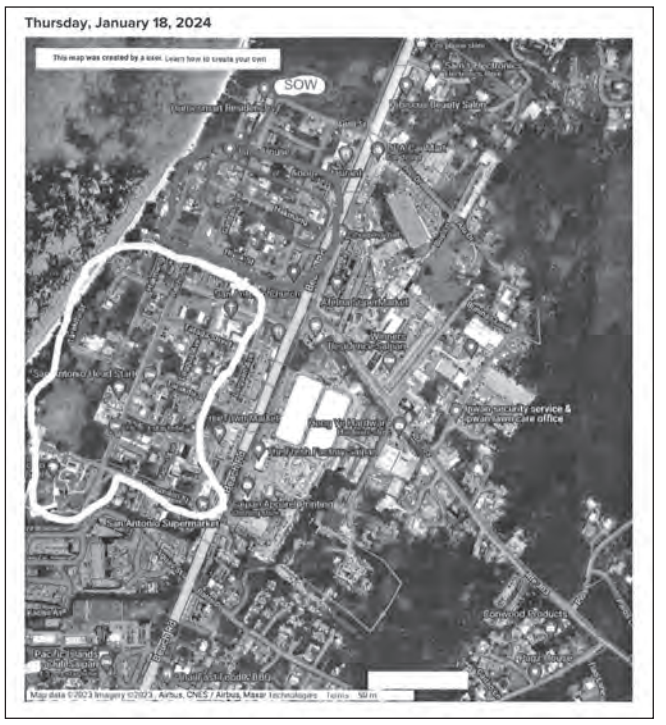
Tuesday, Jan. 30, 2024
Power Service Interruption Time: 8:30am-12:30pm
■ Area(s) Affected: Chalan Kanoa (MS Villagomez building) and Garapan (Majesty Restaurant)
■ Water Wells Affected: None
■ Wastewater Facilities Affected: None
■ Traffic Light(s) Affected: None
■ Purpose: To allow the CUC linemen to replace two 40-foot wooden power poles with oncrete poles and reinstall transformers, respectively.

Wednesday, Jan. 31, 2024
Power Service Interruption Time: 8:30am-2:30pm
■ Area(s) Affected: Garapan Saipan OneTel building, QQ Car Rental, High Roller Poker, and Sang Jee Car Rental)
■ Water Well(s) Affected: None
■ Wastewater Facilities Affected: None
■ Traffic Lights Affected: None
■ Purpose: To allow the CUC linemen to relocate and replace two 40-foot wooden power poles with 40-foot concrete poles, a 45-foot wooden power pole with a 40-foot concrete pole, and to reinstall transformers.

CUC continues to work diligently to minimize any inconvenience to its customers. For more information, contact our hotline at (670) 236-4333, visit our website, and monitor our Facebook page for the latest updates. For emergencies, contact Customer Service at (670) 664-4282. ***(CUC)***



CUC
Map of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.'s scheduled power service interruption on Jan. 17, 2024.



CUC
Map of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.'s scheduled power service interruption on Jan. 18, 2024.

CUC
Map of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.'s scheduled power service interruption on Jan. 20, 2024.

CUC
Map of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.'s scheduled power service interruption on Jan. 23, 2024.

CUC
Map of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.'s scheduled power service interruption on Jan. 24, 2024.

CUC
Map of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.'s scheduled power service interruption on Jan. 30, 2024.

Alcorn named *Guam Business Magazine* 2023 Executive of the Year

TUMON, Guam—David A. Alcorn was named 2023 *Guam Business Magazine* Executive of the Year at the annual Guam Business Magazine Executive of the Year award gala held at the Hyatt Regency Guam on Jan. 13.

Born in Orange County, Calif, Alcorn moved to Honolulu, Hawaii, where he began his career in hospitality working at Smitty's Pancake House. In 1975, Alcorn agreed to the opportunity to fly to Guam and launch King's Restaurant on the island, which GFS would purchase in 1985 from owner Phillip A. Schmidt.

King's now has restaurants in Tamuning at the Guam Premier Outlets and Compadres Mall in Harmon, and Alcorn has said he will expand the chain. GFS brands also include Ruby Tuesday and Domino's at the Navy Exchange Guam.

Alcorn took his early success and experience at King's Restaurants and began to look toward catering contracts. Global Food Services Inc was incorporated in July 2003 and won its first contract on Guam on Oct. 1, 2003, with Raytheon Technical Services Guam for the operation of food services and other Moral Welfare and Recreation activities and would launch GFS as a contractor in the field.

GFS now holds multiple U.S. Department of Defense contracts, including Naval Hospital Dietetic Patient Services; Department of Defense Education Activity's Guam School Lunch Program; the U.S. Marine Corp.'s Regional Feeding for Camp Pendleton, Calif. and Camp Lejeune, N.C. as a subcontractor, and consulting for Sodexo Guam for the Guam Department of Education's School Lunch Feeding contract.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
David A. Alcorn and Lucy M. Alcorn, president and CEO of GFS Group, at the *Guam Business Magazine* Executive of the Year gala last Jan. 13 at the Hyatt Regency Guam.

GFS supports a number of non-profits and community events.

Alcorn is featured on the cover of the *Guam Business Magazine* January-February issue, which was released at the gala.

This year's beneficiaries of the gala are the Guam Chapter of the American Red Cross, the Nicolette Baldovino Community Foundation Inc., the NMI Chapter of the American Red Cross and the Northern Marianas College NMC Foundation.

Alcorn joined five other executives in vying for the prestigious award: Nenita C. Baldovino, owner of Rambies Corp., which does business as Rambies Fast Food and Rambies Catering; William H. Best, vice president and general manager, Smithbridge Guam; Cesar C. Cabot, attorney and founding partner, Cabot Matanona LLP, and owner of CW Holdings LLC, which does business as the Medical Arts Center; John Day, president and chief operating officer, Pacific Data Systems; and Matthew S. Hunter, vice president, chief operating officer, and chief financial officer, Dylan Mechanical Construction Services Inc.

Past Executive of the Year recipients include Robert H. Jones of Triple J Enterprises Inc. (1983); John M. Borlas of IT&E Overseas Inc. (1984); Philip J. Flores of BankPacific (1985); Doris Flores Brooks of the Office of Public Accountability (1986); Mark V. Pangilinan of M.V. Pangelinan Enterprises Inc. (1987); Allen A. Pickens of Tax-Aide (1988); the late T. Roy Sullivan of Jones & Guerrero Co. (1989); Kurt S. Moylan of Moylan's Insurance (1990); the late Akira "Mike" Baba of Baba Corp. (1991); Paul M. Calvo of Calvo Enterprises Inc. (1992); Antoinette D. Sanford of Sanford Technology Group (1993); the late Kenneth T. Jones of Jones & Guerrero Co. (1994); the late Edward M. Calvo of Calvo Enterprises Inc. (1995); L. Carl Peterson of Money Resources Inc. (1996); William R. Thompson (1997) of Atkins Kroll Inc.; the late John K. Lee of First Hawaiian Bank (1998); the late Henry L. Schnabel of Calvo's Insurance Underwriters (1999); Marian Aldan-Pierce of DFS Saipan (2000); Manfred H. Pieper of Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia (2001); Thomas G. Ahillen of Asia Pacific Solutions LLC (2002); Juan T. Guerrero of Herman's Modern Bakery Inc. (2003); Joseph M. Crisostomo of Cars Plus LLC, Cycles Plus and Payless Car Rental (2004); Joseph "Jerry" Kramer of Pacific International Inc. (2004); David M. Sablan of Century Group of Companies (2005); the late Alfred C. Ysrael of Tanota Partners (2006); Lee P. Webber of MDA Guam (2007); Laura-Lynn V. Dacanay of First Hawaiian Bank (2008); Jerry Cho Yee Tan of Tan Holdings Inc. (2009); Lourdes A. "Lou" Leon Guerrero of Bank of Guam (2010); Jay R. Shedd of Pacific Data Systems (2011); Jerrold C. Johnson of Hawaiian Rock Products (2012); George Chiu of Tan Holdings (2013); Norman T. Tenorio of Joeten Enterprises Inc., Pacifica Insurance Underwriters Inc., Tropical Instant Press Inc., Saipan Shipping Co., Saipan Stevedore and Advance Carrier (2014); Jeffrey B. Jones of Triple J Enterprises Inc. (2015); Jose C. "Joe" Ayuyu of McDonald's of Guam and Saipan, RJ Corp. and RJ Guam LLC (2016); Leonard K. Kaae Sr., senior vice president and general manager, Black Construction Corp. (2017); and Bernadette N. Valencia, vice president and general manager of for Micronesia and Okinawa, Matson Navigation Inc. (2018). Annmarie T. Muna, AM Insurance Inc. (2019); Edward G. Untalan, executive vice president, Guam-CNMI region manager of First Hawaiian Bank (2021); Thomas G. Shimizu, general manager of Ambros Inc., Marianas Pacific Distributors Inc., Shimbros International Inc., and South Pacific Distributors Inc. (2022).

Sponsors of the *Guam Business Magazine* Executive of the Year 2023 Gala are Bank of Guam, Rambies, Dylan Mechanical Construction Services, First Hawaiian Bank, Ambros, Pacific Data Systems, Coast360 Federal Credit Union, Calvo's Insurance, Mobil Oil, Gemkell, Power 98FM, The Wave 105.1 FM, Coca-Cola, Foremost, Shooting Star Productions and the Hyatt Regency Guam.

For further details, see www.guambusinessmagazine.com or call (671) 483-2003. ***(Guam Business Magazine)***

Coast Guard Guam continues to troubleshoot temporary radio communication disruption

SANTA RITA, Guam—U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam continues to address the ongoing temporary U.S. Coast Guard outage of VHF-FM radio communications, which is integral for maritime safety, on Jan. 15, 2024.

"Our dedicated team of technicians is actively working to restore our full functionality as swiftly as possible," said Lt. Kira Adams, command center chief at the Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam Joint Rescue Sub-Center. "We understand the importance of VHF-FM radio communications for maritime safety and appreciate the patience and cooperation of the maritime community during this period. The safety and well-being of our mariners and waterway users remain our top priority."

Ongoing efforts and progress

1. Technical Visits to Remote Fixed Facility (RFF) Towers: Technical teams are visiting the RFF towers, conducting thorough assessments and implementing necessary interventions. These towers are crucial for the VHF-FM radio communication network, and experts employ their extensive skills to ensure a timely resolution to allow the U.S. Coast Guard to be able to monitor and transmit on VHF-FM.

2. Direct Leadership Engagement with First Responder Partners: Leaders from our Joint Rescue Sub-Center actively visit and discuss the issue with first responder partners who also utilize and monitor VHF-FM communications. These discussions are crucial for maintaining a collaborative and coordinated response to the current outage, ensuring that all parties involved are informed and prepared to assist as needed.

3. Continued Diligence by Technicians: Technicians across the Service at the forefront of this effort are working tirelessly to identify and rectify the outage root cause of the outage. Their expertise and commitment are invaluable in navigating this complex situation and are following established troubleshooting procedures with the Network Operation Center and U.S. Coast Guard Cyber Command along with telecom partners and contractors.

Safety measures and recommendations

While working to resolve this issue, the U.S. Coast Guard strongly encourages mariners and waterway users to:

■ Have alternative communication methods available, including cellular and satellite phones, 406 MHz emergency beacons, and HF radios.

■ Stay vigilant and informed about weather and maritime conditions.

■ Ensure readiness with emergency procedures and safety equipment.

The U.S. Coast Guard will provide additional updates as more information becomes available. Watchstanders can be reached by phone at (671) 355-4824 for maritime emergencies.

The outage began on Jan. 12. The disruption is an unintended consequence of a routine and pre-planned router relocation to enhance the unit's operational capabilities. This outage does not impact the effectiveness of Search And Rescue Satellite Aided Tracking alerts from 406 MHz beacons, HF communications, or phone services. More information about the Rescue 21 system is available at https://www.dcms.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/Assistant-Commandant-for-Acquisitions-CG-9/Programs/C4ISR-Programs/Rescue-21/.

The U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam team focuses on maritime safety, security, and stewardship in Oceania. With a primary presence in Guam and Saipan and over 300 members across Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the team maintains a strong U.S. presence in the Micronesia sub-region and adjacent areas, closely tied to local communities. ***(USCG)***

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 11

Published daily at 2/F JP Center,
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The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Inoculated against democracy: Trump immunity claim is dangerous

Donald Trump was in federal court Wednesday as his lawyers laid out his preposterous argument that presidents are immune from federal prosecution for actions taken in office unless impeached and convicted in the Senate. Whatever the three-judge appeals panel decides, the case will most likely end up before the Supreme Court, which must reject this ridiculous notion.

A detail here that's easy to overlook is that Trump's legal claim rests on the premise that whatever Trump could have immunity to do, Joe Biden could too. That he feels comfortable explicitly stating this in court counteracts all the bluster about some supposed Biden plot to use the federal government against Trump.

If he were really worried that Biden was abusing his official position and directing shadowy and improper investigations against his political rival, the former president wouldn't simultaneously be arguing that Biden could and should be able to do so consequence-free.

Trump is advancing this fringe position because, despite the rhetoric, he knows that Biden does not and would not engage in all of the sinister authoritarian machinations he describes, and which Trump has been all too happy to insist he would engage in with gusto if elected again.

Biden won't try to wrangle additional votes out of state officials or recruit fake electors, much less engage in the higher-order hypotheticals that Trump's legal team suggested, in oral arguments, presidents can't be prosecuted for. These included sending Navy SEALs to assassinate a political opponent (which in this case would be Trump himself).

This thinking has always been one of Trump's most personally useful attributes: he'll do what others won't, broach any legal and ethical constraints and plow ahead, staring down anyone in a position to hold him accountable, daring them to stop him. For the most part, they haven't.

Trump has based huge amounts of his phony business empire on fraud, obfuscation, nonpayment of contractors and playing chicken with the banks, threatening default and going bankrupt and paying little to no taxes. He just kept getting away with it. Being told "no" by the voters in 2020 was such a shock that he simply refused to accept it and tried mightily to overturn their choice.

That's the core of Trump, his fundamental essence. He believes that Biden won't go after him even if the immunity claim succeeds, not because Biden is a principled person or a believer in the rule of law, but because Biden is a sucker. There are only winners and suckers in Trump's world, and his own voters overwhelmingly fall into the latter category, not that they realize this.

It's already clear that the erratic author of the first serious rebellion in a century and a half will be even more unchained in a second term, and he's been candid about his desire to punish and subjugate all his real and perceived opponents and wave off any legal or constitutional limitations.

A blank check to abuse his office without the recourse of

See INOCULATED on Page 9

Black elected leaders have an obligation to fulfill the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream

By WILLIE WILSON
Chicago Tribune

Willie Wilson is a Chicago business owner and a former 2023 mayoral candidate.

As we honor the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday this Monday with a federal holiday, there will be programs, pageantry and celebrations for a man who expressed a powerful dream in 1963 on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. But that dream remains largely unfulfilled.

King's dream was one of a colorblind society; he challenged America to live up to its founding promises of freedom, equality and justice for all. In spite of a record 62 Black members serving in Congress and Black mayors leading major cities — Chicago, New York, Los Angeles and Philadelphia — Black Americans face inequalities in education, criminal justice, health care, economics and contracting. What's worse is that many state legislatures, including in Georgia, Florida and Mississippi, have passed laws removing Black history from schools and regulating how teachers can discuss race in the classroom, which is a blatant attempt to rewrite history.

King's dream can be realized if Black elected leaders use their power and prestige to bring about equity. For the first time in history, there are a record seven Black statehouse speakers: Emanuel "Chris" Welch in Illinois; Joanna McClinton, Pennsylvania; Adrienne Jones, Maryland; Joe Tate, Michigan; Carl Heastie, New York; Rachel Talbot Ross, Maine; and Don Scott Jr., Virginia. According to USA Today, "state legislatures pass the policies that are the most likely to impact people's day-to-day lives." Too often, though, the voice of Black communities is left out of policymaking. The minority leader of the U.S. House of Representatives is Hakeem Jeffries, a Black man. The collective power of Black elected leaders is unparalleled at this moment.

What good is that power if it is not being used to right the wrongs of the past and present? Black elected leaders must be bold in their policies to end generational poverty and provide hope for communities that have been left behind. They must not be content with the trappings of power.

The Black community needs equity in housing, health care, education, jobs and contracting. The Pew Research Center, in a poll last year, found that more than 80% of Black Americans "say efforts to ensure equality haven't gone far enough." In the same poll, 58% of Latinos, 55% Asians and 44% of white Americans suggest we haven't done enough to ensure equality.

In King's beloved Chicago, a place he once called home, homelessness, hopelessness, drug addiction and mental illness abound. Homeless encampments in public parks and tent cities along expressways underscore the necessity for public policy around affordable and fair housing. In 1966, King moved his family to the North Lawndale neighborhood to highlight awful living conditions for Black people and fight for fair housing. Those conditions have worsened. King likely would be shocked to see the dehumanization of the dispossessed and disinherited and wonder if his protesting were in vain. I think he would be appalled to know that Madison Street on the West Side looks much like it did after the 1968 riots.

When King led a protest in Chicago's Marquette Park neighborhood, he was primarily fighting against a white supremacist establishment that wanted to maintain the status quo. According to the Citizen newspaper, King declared, "I have never in my life seen such hate ... not in Mississippi or Alabama." I wonder what King would say today—as the political paradigm in Chicago, for example, has shifted to Black people serving as major political leaders in Congress, state legislatures and big cities. And yet Black people remain at the bottom of the economic and social ladder.

Black leaders and Springfield Democrats allowed the Invest in Kids scholarship program to expire. The program helped Black students escape poor-performing public schools. Welch, the first Black Illinois House speaker, failed to call the bill for a vote.

Our city, state and nation continue to grapple with persistent health disparities. King said: "Of all forms of inequality, injustice in health is the most shocking and the most inhuman because it often results in physical death." West Side United, a collaborative of hospitals and community leaders started by Dr. David A. Ansell, found that "people who live on Chicago's West Side have a projected life expectancy that is up to 14 years shorter than those who live downtown." Their research suggests the life expectancy gap is driven by "inequities in healthcare, education, economic opportunity, and the physical environment."

See BLACK on Page 9

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

To combat the fentanyl crisis, the US should further target the supply chain

By CHRISTOPHER TANG and THOMAS CHOI
Chicago Tribune

Christopher Tang is a distinguished professor at the University of California at Los Angeles' Anderson School of Management. Thomas Choi is a Regents professor of the W.P. Carey School of Business at Arizona State University.

Fentanyl, a potent synthetic opioid, has created a major public health crisis in the United States. One of the most pressing questions our leaders face is: How can government at the federal and state level deter the flow of illicit fentanyl? By developing a multipronged supply chain strategy that controls the demand and stamps out the supply.

For now, China has agreed to curb the flow of fentanyl to the U.S., as well as the chemical precursors for producing fentanyl that it sends to Mexico. Moving forward, the U.S. must seek global support to develop a comprehensive plan to combat the fentanyl crisis.

Overdoses from fentanyl, a drug that is 50 times more powerful than heroin, were a leading cause of death among Americans ages 18 to 45 in 2022, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported. The issue of fentanyl addiction and overdose has the potential to escalate into a global crisis. While other Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries such as Australia, Germany and the United Kingdom have seen an uptick in opioid consumption, it has not reached the same levels as that in the U.S. and Canada.

In efforts to combat the crisis, lawmakers in the U.S. have passed several policies and regulations. For instance, some states have imposed harsher sentencing, and other states have considered imposing the death sentence for distribution.

In California, people who are convicted of dealing more than 1 kilogram of fentanyl face a longer prison term by three years under a new law signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom. The higher the drug weight, the more severe the penalties become — for example, an extra 25 years of prison time can be imposed for trafficking more than 80 kilograms. However, it seems that more drastic measures, such as a life term in prison, may be more effective in eliminating such crimes, as demonstrated by China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.

Virginia has classified fentanyl as a "weapon of terrorism" in a move to increase prison sentences for dealers. In July, the attorneys general of 18 states pressed President Joe Biden to declare fentanyl a weapon of mass destruction, given that in a single month, U.S. customs seized enough of the drug to kill every American.

Besides laws and punishments for selling and distributing illicit fentanyl, the U.S. government is developing key strategies to control the demand by preventing and treating fentanyl addiction.

■ Education: Educating people about the dangers of fentanyl can discourage them from trying it out as an experiment. Local governments can spearhead public awareness and prevention programs, which could include billboards, podcasts, webinars, hotlines and more.

■ Detox programs: Local governments should collaborate with health professionals to develop detox programs. These programs aim to alleviate withdrawal symptoms, prevent complications and prepare individuals for further treatment. Additionally, local communities should establish support groups like Narcotics Anonymous and SMART Recovery to provide mutual support and maintain motivation during recovery.

■ Naloxone accessibility: State governments are increasing the accessibility of naloxone, a federal government-approved medication designed to rapidly reverse opioid overdoses. Last January, Newsom released a state budget that included$3.5 million to purchase naloxone for every middle and high school in California.

■ Supervised consumption sites: New York City opened the first authorized supervised consumption site in the U.S. in 2021. At these designated sites, individuals can use pre-obtained drugs under the safety and support of trained personnel, thereby preventing overdose deaths.

Controlling fentanyl demand through prevention and treatment is a defensive strategy, and the U.S. should take a proactive strategy to stamp out the supply of the drug.

To reduce preventable overdose deaths in the U.S., it is crucial to understand the flow of fentanyl. Its illegal trade involves numerous illicit supply chain activities. They start with the production of fentanyl precursors in factories in countries such as China and India, followed by the clandestine shipment of these precursors to Mexico, which are often concealed with regular cargo.

The production of fentanyl using these precursors then occurs in secret labs operated by cartels such as the Sinaloa cartel in Mexico. The final drug—frequently mixed into counterfeit pills—is smuggled into the U.S. Ultimately, these fentanyl-laced pills are sold on the street.

Unless China and Mexico are prepared to crack down on these factories and impose severe penalties, U.S. Customs and Border Protection has limited resources and capabilities for preventing fentanyl from entering the U.S.

CBP has been using artificial intelligence models to identify suspicious cars or cargo at the U.S.-Mexico border. However, CBP must expand its efforts beyond the border because fentanyl production and its precursor chemicals are likely to spread beyond China and Mexico. For example, while Mexico and China are the main source for fentanyl and fentanyl-related substances, India emerged as a source for finished fentanyl powder and fentanyl precursors following China's implementation of restrictions on the production and sale of fentanyl in 2019.

The illicit fentanyl supply chain can be compared to a virus—a microscopic organism that can mutate and infect many hosts. Just as doctors need vaccines and treatments to combat a virus, the United States cannot stop this drug epidemic without international cooperation as well as harsher punishment.

Working while sick has become the terrible new normal

By LZ GRANDERSON
Los Angeles Times

LZ Granderson is an Op-Ed columnist for the Los Angeles Times.

January is the month to sign up for stuff you're probably not going to keep doing later. Like cooking class or hot yoga. It's also the month for setting goals, especially at work, where goals often come with lunch and a side of office politics.

Suffice to say January is not the month to be sick.

And yet millions of us are. A wave of infections has 38 states dealing with "high or very high" levels of respiratory illness because of COVID-19, RSV and the flu, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Symptoms range from sore throats and coughs that won't go away to fevers that refuse to break.

So far there've been more than 100,000 hospitalizations from flu this season and 6,500 deaths. COVID is surging, but more than 80% of adults have yet to get an updated booster. The CDC expects the wave of illnesses to expand to pretty much the entire country.

Which is why doctors are advising people to stay home from work if they're sick. But who wants to use sick days in January? You've got 11 more months ahead and might end up much sicker later on. Besides, what does "too sick to come to the office" even mean for workers who can do their jobs remotely? If you're too sick to go to the office, that should mean too sick to work. Yet, we work because we're not that sick. We're something in between.

There's a glitch in the hybrid work life. Before the pandemic, staying home from work meant something. You were out sick, people knew. Friends would show concern. In a cutthroat workplace, maybe rivals would take note of how many days you miss and see signs of weakness to exploit.

So I've heard anyway.

Since the pandemic began and so many people have worked remotely, staying home from work means much less. It's harder for folks who can work remotely to justify using a sick day, because technology makes it so easy to limp along through our tasks when we should be resting. It's an unspoken norm that benefits capital, regardless of how much sick time workers theoretically can take.

This current wave of illnesses has many hybrid employees in this weird limbo where we're just productive enough to keep going but we're sick and probably should stop.

But how do you tell your supervisor you can't work from home while ill, when we all just saw civilization work through a global pandemic?

And even if you did take a legit sick day off, chances are you still checked email or Slack because technology is also addictive. And we just love to scroll. That's how I learned 2024 is an "eight" year in numerology: When you add each digit in 2024 you reach a total of eight, making this an auspicious year to take action. Go after your dreams.

Except many of us are starting this "eight" year sick. And those who can work from home are probably going to do so despite not feeling well, because that's the new normal: We worked when we had COVID. We worked with long COVID and brain fog. Now, unless you're in the hospital, you just … work.

Last year, a record 44% of employees worldwide said they were stressed, according to Gallup. Before you start blaming younger generations, the stress level of employees around the world has been steadily climbing for more than a decade. It would seem the more advanced our technology gets, the more stressful working life becomes.

So here's a thought for goal-setting season: Maybe your ambition for this year should be to take a real day off when you're sick.

INOCULATED

From page 8

criminal investigation, his authority subject only to what may well be a feckless GOP House or Senate, would make things immensely worse.

It's an absurd argument on its face, but in the hands of Donald Trump, it would be an incredibly dangerous tool.

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BLACK

From page 8

Our elected leaders matter because government has an impact. Government leaders' arrogance and perpetuation of inequality can be seen in their response to the migrant crisis. Gov. J.B. Pritzker, Mayor Brandon Johnson and Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle are diverting hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars to provide for migrants. A government that fails to prioritize, protect and provide for its citizens is morally bankrupt.

The following are suggestions to make King's dream a reality:

■ Black elected leaders at the federal, state and local levels must unite and use their collective voice to present bold policy initiatives and resources to close racial disparities.

■ Business and government leaders should fund think tanks at historically Black colleges and universities to measure progress regarding generational issues affecting Black communities.

■ Citizens must vote and hold elected officials accountable for improving their quality of life.

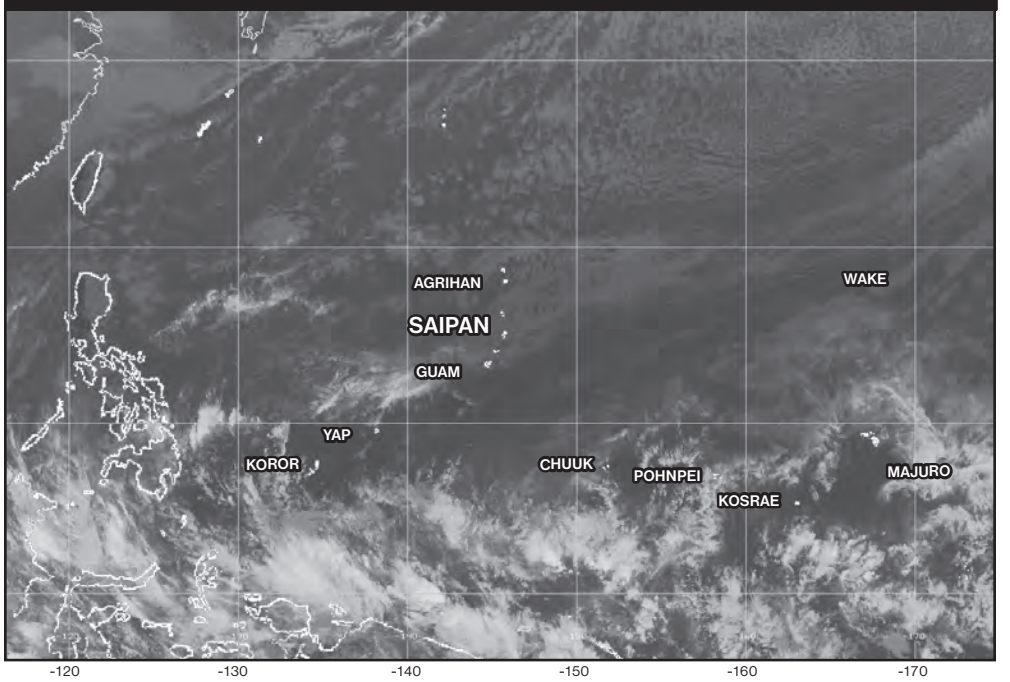
I write this commentary to make those comfortable with promoting inequality and injustice uncomfortable.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Partly sunny with isolated showers. Northeast winds 15 to 20 mph.	Windy. Mostly cloudy, becoming partly cloudy Thursday. A 20 percent chance of showers.	Breezy. Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Breezy. Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Breezy. Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.
86 77°	86 77°	86 77°	86 77°	86 77°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 8:17 AM MONDAY, JANUARY 15, 2024

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Moderate to fresh winds prevail at Guam and Rota, meanwhile Tinian and Saipan are encountering fresh to strong winds induced by a fragment of a shear line. Buoys and recent altimetry passes indicate seas are 8 to 11 feet.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Mostly Cloudy	84° / 77°
Palau	Cloudy	84° / 77°
Yap	Partly Cloudy	84° / 79°
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	85° / 80°
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	85° / 80°
Kosrae	Cloudy	85° / 80°
Majuro	Thunderstorms	84° / 79°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:46 AM	6:06 PM
Wednesday	6:46 AM	6:06 PM
Thursday	6:46 AM	6:07 PM
Friday	6:46 AM	6:08 PM
Saturday	6:47 AM	6:08 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	10:34 AM	10:55 PM	-
Wednesday	11:14 AM	11:50 PM	-
Thursday	11:54 AM	-	-
Friday	-	12:46 AM	12:36 PM
Saturday	-	1:42 AM	1:21 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	76° / 63°
Beijing	Fair	38° / 15°
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	74° / 61°
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	77° / 68°
London	Rain	44° / 36°
Los Angeles	Sunny	84° / 55°
Manila	Partly Cloudy	86° / 76°
Melbourne	Mostly Cloudy	69° / 53°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	71° / 63°
New York	Partly Cloudy	49° / 37°
Osaka	Mostly Cloudy	50° / 45°
Paris	Rain	48° / 38°
Busan	Sunny	56° / 35°
Rome	Partly Cloudy	55° / 32°
Salem	Sunny	57° / 41°
San Francisco	Fog	61° / 47°
Seoul	Sunny	34° / 16°
Tokyo	Fair	52° / 38°
Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	48° / 32°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
5:08 AM	Low Tide	-0.28
11:56 AM	High Tide	1.83
6:12 PM	Low Tide	0.68
11:13 PM	High Tide	1.48

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SUBSCRIPTION Published Monday to Friday, Saipan Tribune offers door-to-door on-island delivery at an annual rate of $180. For additional subscription information, call (670) 235-8747 or 235-2769, or fax 235-3740.

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 1, 2024

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/703	3:10AM	10:30PM	4, 7 via ICN
7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily
OZ626	3:10AM	6:55AM	4,7
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
OZ702/625	12:05PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6 via ICN
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily
OZ625	8:20PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2024

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Daily
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	14:00	14:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1209	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	14:30	14:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2109	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

Hyatt's pool side Splash Bar is back in service again

Hyatt Regency Saipan's legendary poolside bar is looking forward to welcome back all guests each weekend from 11:30am to 8pm.

Extinguish your thirst and enjoy refreshing cocktails that includes golden margarita, long island iced tea, or hojito. House and sparkling wines as well as beers, including drafted from the tab are being offered. Non-alcoholic drinks such as shirley temple, lemonades, and sodas are equally fresh and cold.

Delicious bites from cheeseburgers, rib-eye steak tacos, chicken kelaguen, Chamorro hot dogs, to simply French fries are being prepared from the pool side kitchen. Further, Splash Bar caters chicken caesar wraps, finger sandwiches, and ice cream, all to be enjoyed along the bar counter or seated nearby with live sports TV entertainment.

Easily navigate your way to an enjoyable weekend at Hyatt Regency Saipan via the hotel's parking lot or more convenient via American Memorial Park's side entrance.

Splash Bar diners can purchase pool passes at the Front desk to further enjoy the lagoon and loungers throughout the day.

For more information, visit saipan.hyatt.regency.com, Facebook and Instagram "Hyatt Regency Saipan" or call, (670) 234-1234. ***(Hyatt)***

AP

Navigate your way to a great weekend at Splash Bar with refreshing cocktails and delicious quick bites

As legal challenges mount, companies retool diversity and inclusion programs

NEW YORK (AP)—Advocates of diversity efforts are steeling themselves for a fight this year as a growing number of lawsuits take aim at programs intended to advance racial equity in the corporate world.

Lawsuits making their way through the courts have targeted prominent companies and a wide array of diversity initiatives, including fellowships, hiring goals, anti-bias training and contract programs for minority or women-owned businesses. Most have been filed by conservative activists who have been encouraged by the Supreme Court's June ruling ending affirmative action in college admissions and are seeking to set a similar precedent in the workplace.

The battle has been a roller coaster of setbacks and victories for both sides, but some companies are already retooling their diversity programs in the face of legal challenges, and the expectation that the conservative-dominated Supreme Court will eventually take up the issue.

"There's a dragnet that I think we should all be concerned about," said Alphonso David, President & CEO of the Global Black Economic Forum and a legal counsel for the Fearless Fund, an Atlanta-based nonprofit that is facing a lawsuit over a grant program for businesses owned by Black women.

"It's all coordinated to reverse existing law and advance a chilling effect throughout many industries," David said.

One conservative activist, Christopher Rufo, claimed a victory this month with the resignation of Harvard's first Black woman president, Claudine Gay, after allegations of plagiarism and a furor over her congressional testimony about antisemitism.

Rufo, who has cast Gay's appointment to the job as the culmination of misguided diversity and inclusion efforts, vowed on the social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter, not to "stop until we have abolished DEI ideology from every institution in America."

Civil Rights advocates are fighting back. On Monday, the National Action Network, led by the Rev. Al Sharpton, plans to announce a national drive to defend diversity programs at an annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day breakfast in Washington.

Sharpton and other prominent civil rights activist have rallied around the Fearless Fund as it fights a lawsuit brought by the American Alliance for Equal Rights, a group founded by anti-affirmative action activist Edward Blum, the man behind the college admissions cases the Supreme Court ruled on in June. The lawsuit alleges that one of the Fearless Fund's grant contests discriminates against non-Black women and asks the courts to imagine a similar program designed only for white applicants.

In late September, a federal judge in Atlanta refused to block the contest, saying the grants are donations protected by the First Amendment and the lawsuit was likely to fail. But days later, a three-judge federal appeals panel suspended the contest, calling it "racially exclusionary" and saying the suit was likely to succeed.

Oral arguments in the case are scheduled for Jan. 31. The outcome of the case could be a bellwether for similar diversity programs.

Advocates say the legal backlash comes at a time when investment in diversity programs are slowing following a surge in 2020 in the wake of racial protests over the police killing of George Floyd. Job openings for diversity officers and similar positions have declined in recent months. The combined share of venture capital funding for businesses owned by Black and Latina women has dipped back to less than 1% after briefly surpassing that threshold—at 1.05%—in 2021 following a jump in 2020, according to the nonprofit advocacy group digitalundivided.

Faced with a messy legal landscape, companies are being cautious. Most major companies have so far stuck by diversity initiatives, which many ramped up in the face of pressure from some shareholders, employees and customers. Starbucks and Disney are among companies that have so far prevailed in court against challenges to their Diversity Equity and Inclusion policies.

But some have made changes to diversity programs to try to protect them from legal scrutiny.

Among those are two prominent law firms that had faced lawsuits by Blum's group. The firms, Morrison Foerster and Perkins Coie, opened their diversity fellowship programs to all applicants of all races in October, changes the companies said were in the works before Blum's lawsuits, which he subsequently dropped.

GOP tries to block Biden admin plan to cut money for anti-abortion counseling centers

WASHINGTON (AP)—In a new twist to the fight over abortion access, congressional Republicans are trying to block a Biden administration spending rule that they say will cut off millions of dollars to anti-abortion counseling centers.

The rule would prohibit states from sending federal funds earmarked for needy Americans to so-called "crisis pregnancy centers," which counsel against abortions. At stake are millions of dollars in federal funds that currently flow to the organizations through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, a block grant program created in 1996 to give cash assistance to poor children and prevent out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

"Programs that only or primarily provide pregnancy counseling to women only after they become pregnant likely do not meet the ... standard," the Health and Human Services agency said in its rule proposal released late last year.

More than 7,000 comments have been submitted on the proposed rule, which includes a series of restrictions on how states would be able to spend TANF dollars.

The proposal limiting funds for anti-abortion counseling centers is the Biden administration's latest attempt to introduce federal policies that expand abortion access. Conservative states, meanwhile, have severely restricted the care since the U.S. Supreme Court stripped women of their federal right to an abortion in 2022.

Congressional Republicans this week introduced legislation that would block the Health and Human Services Agency from restricting the funds from the centers. The bill has no chance of becoming law this year.

"Pregnancy centers are an important and vital alternative for expectant mothers," Republican Rep. Darin LaHood of Illinois said Thursday during a House Ways and Means Committee hearing to mark up the legislation.

The anti-abortion counseling centers have become an increasingly popular way for conservatives to sermonize against abortions, with an Associated Press investigation last year finding that states have been sending more and more money to the programs over the last decade. More than a dozen states have given the centers roughly $500 million in taxpayer dollars since 2010. Last year, Pennsylvania's Democratic governor cut funding for all centers from the state budget.

The centers' mission is controversial not only because workers often advise pregnant patients against seeking an abortion, but, critics say, the organizations can provide some misleading information about abortion and contraception, like suggesting that abortion can cause breast cancer. Most centers are religiously affiliated and not licensed healthcare facilities. They typically offer pregnancy tests and some offer limited medical services such as ultrasounds.

The Human Coalition, an anti-abortion organization that has locations in Georgia, Ohio, Pennsylvania, North Carolina and Texas, estimates it would lose millions of dollars in funds, said Chelsey Youman, the group's national director of public policy. Plans to expand to Louisiana and Indiana could be put on hold if the rule goes through, she added.

Youman argues that her organization helps connect women to social services, like Medicaid, while persuading them to continue with their pregnancy.

"The work we do is truly compassionate and loving care for women who are facing sometimes the most difficult moment of their life," Youman said.

HHS is suggesting several tweaks that would change how states can use the $16.5 billion in block grants intended for the nation's neediest families. The proposal comes on the heels of a high-profile corruption scandal in Mississippi, where $77 million in TANF funds were squandered over several years.

The restrictions would limit how much of the money ends up benefitting middle- and high-income earners, with the agency saying that the percentage of impoverished families who get cash assistance has dropped from nearly 70% in 1996 to just over 21% in 2020. The plan would restrict how states use the money for college scholarships and child care, for example.

Nation

IN CLOSING PITCH IOWA REPUBLICANS

Trump says votes can help him punish his enemies

INDIANOLA, Iowa (AP)—Donald Trump implored his supporters Sunday to brave frigid temperatures and deliver him a decisive victory in Monday's Iowa caucuses, saying their vote would help bring to Washington the retribution he has repeatedly promised if he returns to the White House.

The former president has set sky-high expectations for his own performance in the first contest of the race for the Republican presidential nomination. He spent the day before the caucuses trying to ensure he meets them. His main GOP rivals all spent Sunday in Iowa as well, making last-minute appeals to Iowans open to hearing them.

At a rally in Indianola, Trump said his supporters could fight back against his political enemies, claiming that the four indictments he faces were driven by politics and renewing his false claims about the 2020 election he lost to Democrat Joe Biden.

Many in the crowd wore white and gold caps identifying them as Trump caucus captains who will help round up support for him Monday night.

"These caucuses are your personal chance to score the ultimate victory over all of the liars, cheaters, thugs, perverts, frauds, crooks, freaks, creeps and other quite nice people," Trump told the audience. "The Washington swamp has done everything in its power to take away your voice. But tomorrow is your time to turn on them and to say and speak your mind and to vote."

AP

Supporters react as Republican presidential candidate former President Donald Trump arrives to speak at a rally at Simpson College in Indianola, Iowa, Sunday, Jan. 14, 2024.

More than 30 minutes before the doors opened for Trump's rally at Simpson College, Marc Smiarowski said he planned to do just that.

"I'm here in part out of spite," said the 44-year-old public utility worker who drove 40 miles from Huneston to see Trump. "I can't abandon him. After what they did to him in the last election, and the political persecution he faces, I feel like I owe him this. He's our only option."

He was among more than 100 layered in Carhartt coveralls with hats and hoods pulled down tight to fight off the minus 18-degree Fahrenheit (minus 28-degree Celsius) chill. It was a test run for Iowa's caucuses Monday night—and of the devotion Trump said last week would make his supporters "walk on glass" for him.

He took it a step further on Sunday, suggesting casting a vote for him would be worth dying for.

"You can't sit home," Trump said. "If you're sick as a dog, you say 'Darling, I gotta make it.' Even if you vote and then pass away, it's worth it."

Even as he predicted his supporters would deliver a substantial victory over his nearest rival, he sought to temper expectations that he could cross 50% of the vote, a threshold never crossed in a contested Republican caucus. The previous record for a margin of victory was Bob Dole's nearly 13-point win over Pat Robertson in 1988.

"Well we should do that. If we don't do that, let 'em criticize us, right?" Trump told volunteers in Des Moines on Sunday morning. Still, he told them: "Let's see if we can get to 50%."

Both former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who has bet big on Iowa, exuded confidence in national interviews as they compete for a caucus showing that will boost their campaigns even if they don't beat Trump.

The final Des Moines Register/ NBC News poll before Monday's caucuses found Trump maintaining a formidable lead, supported by nearly half of likely caucusgoers, compared with 20% for Haley and 16% for DeSantis. Haley and DeSantis remain locked in a close battle for second.

Migrant deaths in Rio Grande intensify tensions between Texas and Biden admin over crossings

BROWNSVILLE, Texas (AP)—After Texas fenced off a park along the U.S.-Mexico border and began turning away Border Patrol agents, Republican Gov. Greg Abbott explained why at a campaign stop near Houston.

"We are not allowing Border Patrol on that property anymore," Abbott said Friday, drawing applause from supporters while endorsing a state legislator running for reelection. He relayed frustration over migrants illegally entering the U.S. through the border city of Eagle Pass and federal agents loading them onto buses.

"We said, 'We've had it. We're not going to let this happen anymore,'" Abbott said.

Later that night, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security said three migrants, including two children, drowned near the park after Texas officials "physically barred" Border Patrol agents from entering. Mexican authorities pulled the bodies, each of them wearing jackets, from the water on the other side of the Rio Grande.

The weekend deaths intensified tensions between Texas and the Biden administration. They also unleashed a new round of criticism from Democrats over Abbott's aggressive actions to curb illegal crossings, accusing the measures of putting migrants at risk. U.S. authorities described the drownings as underscoring the need for Border Patrol agents to have access to the area around Shelby Park, which Texas closed off earlier this week.

"U.S. Border Patrol must have access to the border to enforce our laws," White House spokesman Angelo Fernández Hernández said in a statement.

On Sunday evening, the Texas Military Department released a statement disputing the U.S. government's accounts, calling it "wholly inaccurate" that state personnel prevented Border Patrol from saving drowning migrants.

"At the time that Border Patrol requested access, the drownings had occurred, Mexican authorities were recovering the bodies, and Border Patrol expressed these facts to the TMD personnel on site," the department said.

The Biden administration stuck to its initial account Sunday, saying in a letter to Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton that Texas denied Border Patrol agents access before they knew the migrants died. In a direct contradiction of Texas' version of events, Homeland Security said agents at the time knew only that migrants were attempting to cross the river.

"Texas has demonstrated that even in the most exigent circumstances, it will not allow Border Patrol agents access to the border to conduct law enforcement and emergency response activities," wrote Jonathan E. Meyer, Homeland Security's general counsel.

Meyer threatened legal action if Texas doesn't restore access by the end of Wednesday.

The park lies in a major corridor for migrants entering illegally from Mexico and is at the center of Abbott's aggressive attempts to stop them, known as Operation Lone Star. Migrants are periodically swept away to their deaths by the current of the Rio Grande.

U.S. Rep. Henry Cuellar, a Democrat who represents a Texas border district, acknowledged Sunday that state officials investigated the distress call and searched for the migrants.

"However, the bottom line is that Border Patrol was barred from entering Shelby Park," Cuellar said in a statement.

Texas officials said Border Patrol agents had requested access to find other migrants who were presumed to have been with those who died. Two were apprehended by state military personnel, including one who was transferred to medics with "hypothermic conditions." The statement did not say whether Border Patrol agents were allowed in the park.

Millions of Americans face below-zero temperatures

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP)—Subfreezing temperatures across much of the U.S. left millions of Americans facing dangerous cold as Arctic storms left four dead and knocked out electricity to tens of thousands in the Northwest, brought snow to the South, and walloped the Northeast with blizzard conditions that forced the postponement of an NFL game.

» As storms bring blast of Arctic air, snow, and ice

An estimated 95 million people nationwide faced weather warnings or advisories Sunday for wind chills below zero Fahrenheit (minus 17 Celsius). Forecasters said the severe cold was expected to push as far south as northern Texas while the bitter blast sends wind chill readings as low as minus 70 degrees (minus 56 Celsius) in Montana and the Dakotas.

"It takes a matter of minutes for frostbite to set in," the South Dakota Department of Public Safety said in a statement Sunday urging people to stay indoors.

In Buffalo, New York, where snowfall of 1 to 2 feet (30 to 60 centimeters) was forecast, severe conditions led officials to postpone the Buffalo Bills-Pittsburgh Steelers NFL playoff game from Sunday to Monday. Winds whipped at 30 mph (48 kph), and snow was falling at a rate of 2 inches (5 centimeters) per hour.

Workers with shovels and trucks worked to clear snow from the field at Buffalo's Highmark Stadium as the Bills warned volunteers eager to help with the shoveling to stay at home and not defy a travel ban on area roads.

"Looks like a pretty good day to not have a football game," New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, a Buffalo native, posted on X with a video clip of whiteout conditions in the western New York city.

At least one Bills player was out in the bad weather Sunday putting his newfound free time to good use. Offensive tackle Ryan Van Demark shared a video on Instagram showing fellow lineman Alec Anderson helping a motorist struggling with icy road conditions.

"Good Samaritan, Alec, helping the people," Van Demark narrates on the brief clip.

Zack Taylor, a National Weather Service meteorologist in College Park, Maryland, warned some parts of the Northeast would see intense snowfall and extreme winds, with gusts up to 50 mph (89 kph) possible.

"That's why they're expecting to see near-blizzard conditions at times," Taylor said.

Asia

North Korea has launched suspected intermediate-range ballistic missile

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—North Korea fired a suspected intermediate-range ballistic missile into the sea on Sunday, South Korea's military said, two months after the North claimed to have tested engines for a new harder-to-detect missile capable of striking distant U.S. targets in the region.

» Can reach distant US bases

The launch was the North's first this year. Experts say North Korea could ramp up its provocative missile tests as a way to influence the results of South Korea's parliamentary elections in April and the U.S. presidential election in November.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement that it detected the launch of a ballistic missile of an intermediate-range class from the North's capital region on Sunday afternoon. It said the missile flew about 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) before landing in the waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff called the launch a provocation that poses a serious threat to peace on the Korean Peninsula. It said South Korea's military will maintain its readiness to overwhelmingly respond to any provocations by North Korea.

The South Korean assessment suggests North Korea could have launched a new intermediate-range ballistic missile, whose solid-fuel engine the North said it had tested in mid-November.

The missile is mainly designed to hit U.S. military bases in the U.S. Pacific territory of Guam, which is about 3,400 kilometers (2,110 miles) from Pyongyang, the North's capital. With a range adjustment, the missile can also be used to attack closer targets—the U.S. military installations in Japan's Okinawa island, according to Chang Young-keun, a missile expert at the Korea Research Institute for National Strategy in Seoul.

Built-in solid propellants make missile launches harder to detect than liquid-fueled missiles, which must be fueled before launch and cannot last long. North Korea has a growing arsenal of solid-fuel short-range missiles targeting South Korea, but its existing Hwasong-12 intermediate-range missile is powered by liquid-fuel engines.

Japan's Defense Ministry said its analysis showed the missile traveled at least 500 kilometers (300 miles) at the maximum altitude of 50 kilometers (30 miles), data that suggest North Korea may have fired a short-range and not an intermediate-range missile.

Japan and South Korea said they closely exchanged information about the launch with the United States, but they didn't immediately explain the discrepancy in data.

In a trilateral call later Sunday, senior diplomats from South Korea, the U.S. and Japan condemned the North Korean launch and stressed that a North Korean provocation would lead to the three countries strengthening their security cooperation, according to South Korea's Foreign Ministry.

The last time North Korea performed a missile launch was Dec. 18, when it test-fired its Hwasong-18 solid-fueled intercontinental ballistic missile, the North's most advanced weapon. The Hwasong-18 is the country's only known solid-fuel ICBM and it's designed to strike the mainland U.S.

On Jan. 5, North Korea fired a barrage of artillery shells near the disputed western sea boundary with South Korea, prompting South Korea to conduct similar firing exercises in the same area. The site is where the navies of the two Koreas have fought three bloody sea battles since 1999, and attacks blamed on North Korea killed 50 South Koreans in 2010.

War of words after Taiwan election highlights the intractable divide over the island's fate

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP)—A war of words erupted the day after Taiwan's presidential and parliamentary elections, with Taiwan on Sunday accusing China of making "fallacious comments" and China criticizing the U.S. for congratulating the winner.

The verbal sparring highlighted the seemingly intractable divide over Taiwan's fate, a major flashpoint in U.S.-China relations that risks leading to an actual war in the future.

The victory of Lai Ching-te in Saturday's election was a setback for China's efforts to bring Taiwan under its control. His Democratic Progressive Party advocates maintaining the status quo, in which Taiwan governs itself but refrains from declaring formal independence — a move that could trigger a Chinese military response. China, meanwhile, calls for what it terms a "peaceful reunification," but that seems increasingly unrealistic as most Taiwanese have come to oppose becoming part of China.

Taiwan said as much, taking issue with China over its often-repeated line that Taiwan is a domestic Chinese issue. China regards the island of 23 million people as a renegade province and says it shouldn't have its own president or official relations with foreign governments.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry said in a statement on the election that "the Taiwan question is China's internal affair" and "the basic fact that .... Taiwan is part of China will not change."

Taiwan said that statement "is completely inconsistent with international understanding and the current cross-strait situation. It goes against the expectation of global democratic communities and goes against the will of the people of Taiwan to uphold democratic values. Such cliches are not worth refuting."

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken congratulated Lai on his victory, and saying Washington looks forward to working with all of Taiwan's leaders "to advance our shared interests and values." It congratulated the people of Taiwan for demonstrating the strength of their democracy, a nod to the Biden administration's efforts to find common ground with other democracies in the face of China's rise.

China's Foreign Ministry said the U.S. statement "sends a gravely wrong signal to the 'Taiwan independence' separatist forces" and goes against a U.S. commitment to maintaining only unofficial ties with Taiwan.

Lai's victory means the Democratic Progressive Party will continue to hold the presidency for a third four-year term, following eight years under President Tsai Ing-wen. But he won a three-way race for president with 40% of the vote, less than the clear majority Tsai won in 2020. He will take office in May.

The Democratic Progressive Party lost its majority in the legislature, finishing with one seat fewer than the Kuomintang, or Nationalist Party. Neither holds a majority, giving the Taiwan People's Party—a relatively new force that won eight of the 113 seats—a possible swing vote on legislation.

World

More countries join talks on Zelenskyy's peace formula

AP

Ukraine's Head of the Office of the President Andriy Yermak speaks at a news conference after the 4th meeting of the National Security Advisors, NSA, on the peace formula for Ukraine in Davos, Switzerland, Sunday, Jan. 14, 2024.

DAVOS, Switzerland (AP)—Leaders of talks on Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's peace formula on Sunday said a growing number of countries are working to help set the groundwork for Russia to join one day, an admittedly distant goal as the nearly two-year war grinds on and with neither side willing to cede ground.

» But Russia is absent and war grinds on

The fourth such meeting of national security advisers was held in the Swiss town of Davos, where Zelenskyy is set to attend the World Economic Forum's annual meeting starting Tuesday. He will endeavor to keep up international focus on Ukraine's defense amid eroding support for Kyiv in the West and swelling distractions like conflict in the Middle East.

Andriy Yermak, the Ukrainian president's chief of staff, posted photos of the meeting's opening and hailed a "good sign" that the number of participants in a string of conferences on Zelenskyy's peace formula was growing—nearly half from Europe, as well as 18 from Asia and 12 from Africa.

"Countries from the Global South are increasingly getting involved in our work. It shows understanding that this European conflict is in fact a challenge for all humanity," he wrote.

Zelenskyy has presented a 10-point peace formula that, among other things, seeks the expulsion of all Russian forces from Ukraine and accountability for war crimes—at a time when the two sides are fighting from largely static positions along a roughly 1,500-kilometer (930-mile) front line. Such ideas are rejected out of hand by Moscow.

Yermak said that if Ukraine's territorial integrity—now violated by Russia including through illegal annexations—isn't restored, "soon other aggressors elsewhere in the world will be able to seize parts of other countries and start staging fake elections there."

At a final news conference, Yermak said the purpose of the meeting—the last in a series—was to discuss issues like an eventual Russian withdrawal, a path to justice, environmental security and ultimately how the war might be declared over.

Yemen Houthi rebels fire missile at US warship in Red Sea

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP)—Yemen's Houthi rebels fired an anti-ship cruise missile toward an American destroyer in the Red Sea on Sunday, but a U.S. fighter jet shot it down in the latest attack roiling global shipping amid Israel's war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip, officials said.

The attack marks the first U.S.-acknowledged fire by the Houthis since America and allied nations began strikes Friday on the rebels following weeks of assaults on shipping in the Red Sea.

The Houthis have targeted that crucial corridor linking Asian and Mideast energy and cargo shipments to the Suez Canal onward to Europe over the Israel-Hamas war, attacks that threaten to widen that conflict into a regional conflagration.

The Houthis, a Shiite rebel group allied with Iran that seized Yemen's capital in 2014, did not immediately acknowledge the attack.

It wasn't immediately clear whether the U.S. would retaliate for the latest attack, though President Joe Biden has said he "will not hesitate to direct further measures to protect our people and the free flow of international commerce as necessary."

The Houthi fire on Sunday went in the direction of the USS Laboon, an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer operating in the southern reaches of the Red Sea, the U.S. military's Central Command said in a statement.

The missile came from near Hodeida, a Red Sea port city long held by the Houthis, the U.S. said.

"An anti-ship cruise missile was fired from Iranian-backed Houthi militant areas of Yemen toward USS Laboon," Central Command said. "There were no injuries or damage reported."

The first day of U.S.-led strikes Friday hit 28 locations and struck more than 60 targets with cruise missiles and bombs launched by fighter jets, warships and a submarine. Sites hit included weapon depots, radars and command centers, including in remote mountain areas, the U.S. has said.

The Houthis have yet to acknowledge how severe the damage was from the strikes, which they said killed five of their troops and wounded six others.

Overdrive

By HENRY PAYNE
The Detroit News

TNS

The 2023 Lexus UX 250h.

AUTO REVIEW:

Efficient Lexus UX 250h dresses up

OAKLAND COUNTY, Michigan—The auto industry's emerging electric car segment begs the question: how do you differentiate brands if everything sounds like a quiet, electric motor-driven Tesla? Porsche's answer is Porsche-like handling. The Mustang Mach-E pipes in an artificial growl. Dodge says its Daytona Banshee's electronic Fratzonic Chambered Exhaust will roar like, well, a banshee.

Actually, luxury automakers have been struggling with this issue for a while. As electronics democratize auto tech and nanny mpg laws forced drivetrains to downsize to 4-cylinders and CVT transmissions, premium brands have had to hone their brand identities.

Take the Lexus UX 250h F Sport sitting in my driveway. You can see it from space.

Lexus's entry-level ute wears a wild wardrobe that would make Gene Simmons proud. Yuuuuge front grille. Angular peepers with L-shaped eyebrow running lights. L-shaped gills. Dramatic swept flanks that look like the sheet metal was shaped by desert winds. Narrow greenhouse that finishes with three-dimensional taillights arching across the rear.

It's polarizing. Outrageous. A design statement. At $47,930, my hybrid F Sport Handling tester added a moonroof, power-folding mirrors and a kick-open rear hatch. This is a brand you won't confuse with any other.

TNS

The 2023 Lexus UX 250h is front engine, front- and all-wheel-drive, five-passenger hybrid SUV.

Open the front doors and the drama continues. The front seats wrap me in red leather. A Cyclops-eye instrument gauge slides back and forth, depending on how you like your drive data displayed. Drive modes are selected using one of the devil's horns that sprout from the instrument hoodie. Tweak the horn to SPORT or SPORT PLUS and the instrument gauge glows (appropriately) red.

Loud mouth. Red leather. Hoodie. Devil's horns. Oh, this bad boy wants to misbehave. Grab the shifter, yank it into DRIVE and the Lexus's bark ... is worse than its bite.

Stomp the throttle and the 181-horsepower engine drones. Never mind that similarly priced luxury competitors like the Audi Q3 and BMW X2 boast much more powerful turbo-4s — the Lexus will be eaten for lunch by mainstream brands like the 250-horse Mazda CX-30 or 210-horse Kia Soul Turbo.

The latter pair cost less than 35 grand while also offering all-wheel drive and distinctive styling.

Indeed, for a grand less than my 250h tester, you could buy my coveted all-wheel-drive hot hatch VW Golf R with 315 horsepower, digital tech, two more inches of rear legroom/two more cubic feet of cargo space and be the envy of every motorhead on your block. Heck, for the same coin, the BMW X1 has 60 more horsepower, four more inches of rear legroom, and eight more cubic feet of cargo space.

But they don't carry Lexus badges.

The auto industry talks about the Cult of Tesla and its hordes of fans who worship the brand's pioneering, risk-taking, high-tech EV cars. Never mind the, ahem, quality issues. Lexus owners are no less cultish—they just prioritize.

Lexus vehicles are bone reliable, winning so many quality trophies that Tokyo HQ long ago ran out of shelf space. That quality is backed by Disney-quality dealer service, which lavishes customers with attention. I've met Lexus owners who love their dealer contact more than their dog.

Tesla fans marinate in sex appeal but, um would like a little show of quality every once in a while. Over on the Lexus side of the dance floor, they are at home in the trusty arms of their brand, but, um, would it kill them just to take me out on the dance floor and do the swing?

Just once?

Tesla quality is improving and so is Lexus sex appeal. Beneath the UX 250h's wardrobe is a good ol' conservative, reliable appliance.

While autos like the $35K Chevy Bolt EUV (Super Cruise) and $50K Tesla Model 3 (Autopilot) push cutting-edge driver-assistance features, my Lexus offered adaptive cruise control. Cruising down Telegraph Road toward stopped cars at a traffic light, the Lexus's average system would only brake hard once it was nearly on top of the traffic. Um, better to intervene.

NUTS & BOLTS

2023 Lexus UX 250h

- **Vehicle type**: Front engine, front- and all-wheel-drive, five-passenger hybrid SUV
- **Price**: $36,490, including $1,150 destination fee ($47,930 F Sport as tested)
- **Powerplant**: 2.0-liter 4-cylinder mated to twin electric motors (as tested)
- **Power**: 181 horsepower
- **Transmission**: Continuously variable transmission
- **Performance**: 0-60 mph, 8.4 seconds (mfr.); top speed, 110 mph
- **Weight**: 3,604 pounds
- **Fuel economy**: EPA est. mpg 41 city/38 highway/39 combined (AWD as tested)
- **Report card**
- **Highs**: Much improved interior displays; lots of personality
- **Lows**: Tight rear seat; personality ends when you press the pedal
- **Overall**: ★★★

What's wrong with these headlights?

Q: We love our 2007 Prius and we have 217,000 miles on it. About two months ago, I was driving at night on unlighted neighborhood streets and both of my headlights went off. It was pitch black. I toggled the light switch off and on and the headlights came back on. This has happened several times since. We called several dealers and repair shops. They all said to replace the headlight bulbs. Now, if one would go off, I would agree. But both at the same time? I would say it has to be some control that is common to both. The loss of headlights happens randomly. I even looked through a schematic diagram for headlights, and there are several components that are common to both headlights. The simplest one appears to be a ground to chassis, but I am definitely not a mechanic, so I cannot even try to locate it. Have you heard of this problem and the fix for it?

—A.H., Chicago

A: Since toggling the lights switch brings the headlights back, it sounds like a circuit breaker is the problem, but not the underlying cause. If there is an excessive current draw, the breaker will open. When it cools down, the circuit closes and the lights work—temporarily. By switching the lights off, you are allowing the breaker to cool. Unfortunately, I can't guess what that root cause is so you will have to have a technician troubleshoot it.

Q: Are mud guards worth it on new cars? Do they prevent rust on the body behind the wheels? Do they reduce the miles per gallon?

—J.C., Oak Grove, Minnesota

A: Mud guards do not affect fuel economy. And they usually don't contribute to rust, especially if they are installed properly. They do, however, keep mud off the fenders and sometimes the rocker panels, so you may be less likely to soil your jeans getting out.

Q: In response to the question about transition (more properly photochromic) windshields. I was a licensed optician for almost 40 years, so I can cite several issues. Transitions always have a slight residual tint. Transitions darken fairly quick, but take about four times longer to lighten. Enter a tunnel and you'd probably be all the way through it before the windshield lightened. They are temperature-sensitive and don't work as well in hot weather. Not everyone likes transitions. In my experience, most tried them once or twice and then went to a clear pair of eyeglasses and a pair of sunglasses. And finally cost. Transition lenses have millions of silver halide crystals in them. Detroit loves to save pennies, not spend hundreds.

—W.G., Waterford, Connecticut

A: Your response to my reader's question asking why carmakers don't offer transition windshields is an eye-opener. Here's another nugget: Mrs. Motormouth is nearsighted in one eye and farsighted in the other. When she asked about transition lenses, the optometrist told her it would not work.

MOTORMOUTH

BY BOB WEBER
Tribune News Service

Bob Weber is a writer and mechanic who became an ASE-certified Master Automobile Technician in 1976. Weber's work has appeared in professional trade magazines and various consumer publications including Consumer Guide *and* Consumers Digest. *Send questions along with name and town to motormouth.tribune@gmail.com.*

Q: On this past Sunday's issue, you mentioned the "B" pillars. Methinks your description is the "A" pillars. Or maybe I've been wrong for a half-century or more. At any rate, I've always thought that the pillar holding the windshield is the "A" pillar. Keep on writin'.

—P.C., Elizabeth City, North Carolina

Q: In your reply regarding drain tube in your column, you indicated B pillar as between windshield and door frame. That would be the A pillar. Always good dialog in your column.

—D.M., Chicago

A: I might try making up some excuses, but the only one that holds water is a typo. Otherwise, I may have to go back to kindergarten and relearn my ABCs. The dialog with my readers always keeps me on my toes. Thanks.

Life & Style

Frederik X proclaimed the new king of Denmark

» After his mother Queen Margrethe II abdicates

AP

Denmark's Queen Margrethe II signs a declaration of abdication in the Council of State meeting, at Christiansborg Castle in Copenhagen, Sunday, Jan. 14, 2024. Queen Margrethe II has signed her historic abdication, paving the way for her son Frederik X to immediately become king.

COPENHAGEN, Denmark (AP)—Denmark's prime minister proclaimed Frederik X as king on Sunday after his mother Queen Margrethe II formally signed her abdication, with massive crowds turning out to rejoice in the throne passing from a beloved monarch to her popular son.

Margrethe, 83, is the first Danish monarch to voluntarily relinquish the throne in nearly 900 years. Many thousands of people gathered outside the palace where the royal succession took place, the mood jubilant as the Nordic nation experienced its first royal succession in more than a half-century, and one not caused by the death of a monarch.

Denmark's monarchy traces its origins to 10th-century Viking king Gorm the Old, making it the oldest in Europe and one of the oldest in the world. Today the royal family's duties are largely ceremonial.

Margrethe signed her abdication during a meeting with the government at the Christiansborg Palace, a vast complex in Copenhagen that has been the seat of Danish power for centuries. It now houses the Royal Reception Rooms and Royal Stables as well as the Danish Parliament, the prime minister's office and the Supreme Court.

Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen next proclaimed Frederik king from the balcony of the palace before the cheering crowd.

Frederiksen read the proclamation three times, which is the tradition, as Frederik stood beside her wearing a ceremonial military uniform adorned with medals. He was then joined on the balcony by the new, Australian-born Queen Mary and the couple's four children, and the crowd spontaneously sang the national anthem.

"My hope is to become a unifying king of tomorrow," Frederik said. "It is a task I have approached all my life."

It is the custom for each new sovereign to adopt a royal motto as a guiding principle for their reign, and Frederik's is: "United, committed, for the kingdom of Denmark."

"I want to return the trust I meet," the new king said. "I need trust from my beloved wife, you and that which is greater than us."

Frederik kissed Mary, the queen, who wore a white dress with a sash over one shoulder, and another great cheer rose from the crowd.

They then left Christianborg Palace in a horse-drawn coach as church bells rang out, and headed to their Amalienborg residence, where they once again appeared before people cheering and waving the nation's flag of a white cross on a red background.

Frederik, who was visibly moved, placed both hands on his heart in a gesture of thanks.

The abdication document was earlier presented to Margrethe as she sat at a massive table covered in red cloth around which royals and members of the Danish government were seated. Frederik sat beside her.

After signing it, Margrethe, dressed in a magenta skirt suit, rose and gestured to Frederik to take her place. "God save the king," she said as she left the room using a cane for support.

The abdication leaves Denmark with two queens: Margrethe keeps her title, while Frederik's wife becomes Queen Mary. Frederik and Mary's eldest son Christian, 18, has become crown prince and heir to the throne.

Mean Girls' takes 1st place at the box office. So fetch.

By LINDSEY BAHR
AP FILM WRITER

Winter storms and cinema closures in North America didn't dampen the opening weekend for " Mean Girls. " The Paramount release, adapted from the Broadway musical and the 2004 Tina Fey movie, earned $28 million in its first three days in theaters according to studio estimates Sunday. Not accounting for inflation, that's more than the $24.4 million the first movie made in its opening weekend.

The "Mean Girls" competition over the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend featured several new releases, including the Jason Statham action movie " The Beekeeper " and the Jay-Z produced biblical satire "The Book of Clarence," in addition to a slew of awards contenders capitalizing on buzz from recent nominations and the Golden Globes.

As with "Barbie," another enthusiastically pink movie, female audiences made up the vast majority (76%) of opening weekend ticket buyers for "Mean Girls." According to exit polls, 70% were between the ages of 18 and 34, which, yes, means that it had appeal for audiences who hadn't been born when Regina George was first introduced to the world.

- "Mean Girls," $28 million.
- "The Beekeeper," $16.8 million.
- "Wonka," $8.4 million.
- "Anyone But You," $6.9 million.
- "Migration," $6.2 million.
- "Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom," $5.3 million.
- "Night Swim," $4.7 million.
- "The Boys in the Boat," $3.5 million.
- "The Book of Clarence,"$2.6 million.
- "The Iron Claw," $2.4 million.

"The property is iconic," said Chris Aronson, Paramount's president of domestic distribution. "Tina Fey is legendary and her contemporary twist has resonated with audiences, particularly the female audience."

This iteration of "Mean Girls" stars Angourie Rice, Auli'i Cravalho and Reneé Rapp, who played Regina on stage. It was originally planned to go straight to streaming on Paramount+, but the studio pivoted after test scores were positive. Social media played a big part in getting the word out and "Mean Girls" also inspired groups of friends to go to the movies together. An estimated 40% went with two or more friends.

Old sweethearts' meeting reopens a few old wounds

DEAR ABBY: After 35 years, I recently ran into my first love, "Cliff." His sister lost her son, and I went to the wake. She and I were good friends growing up and stayed in touch occasionally through the years. Neither of us ever brought up her brother.

Cliff and I broke up during my senior year of high school. I suspected a very good friend of mine was seeing him behind my back at the same time I was confiding in her over my broken heart. Turns out they got married. They are still married to this day.

When I saw Cliff, he looked at me from a distance with a huge smile on his face and his hand over his heart. We hugged for a good five minutes. He held me the way he did when we were together. I never got closure from our breakup because his girlfriend (now wife) wouldn't allow it.

It turns out she wasn't happy that he and I were speaking that evening. I really want closure even though all these years later I have moved on and am married to the love of my life. I need to heal that part of my heart and know if he still has feelings for me. I have gone through all these years feeling he hates me. Please help.

BITTERSWEET MEMORY IN NEW YORK

DEAR BITTERSWEET: I think you already have the answer to your question. When your old beau saw you, his smile lit up the room and he touched his heart. To me, it sends a strong message. That his wife wasn't thrilled the two of you spent five minutes hugging makes me wonder if she may have sabotaged your high school romance all those years ago. PLEASE go on with your life and stop looking back. You already have the closure you seek.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: My family and I love to go camping and invite friends and family to join us. No matter how large the group is, I tend to be the one cooking all the meals all the time. I actually love to cook, but some of our guests take advantage and don't help out with food prep or clean up, or the setup or take-down of camping equipment. They don't even pick up after their children.

One of them is a co-worker and good friend, and I don't know how to approach her so that there are no hard feelings. I have actually considered not inviting that family again. I'll miss their company, but my family and I think it's rude not to help in any way.

NOT A HAPPY CAMPER

DEAR NOT A HAPPY CAMPER: I agree it's rude not to offer to help one's host in the situation you have described.

DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Before inviting your good friend and co-worker on the next campout, have a chat with her. Explain that if she and her family decide to come along next time, you'll NEED her to assist you with those chores. That way she'll be warned and can refuse the invitation if it is not to her liking.

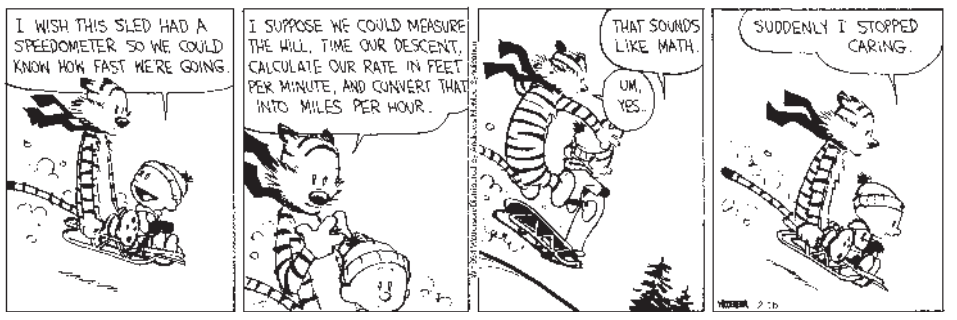
■ ■ ■

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

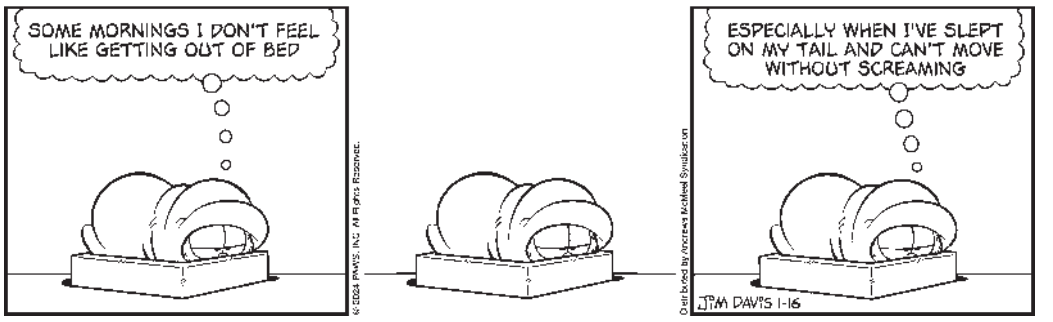
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


I WISH THIS SLED HAD A SPEEDOMETER SO WE COULD KNOW HOW FAST WE'RE GOING.
I SUPPOSE WE COULD MEASURE THE HILL, TIME OUR DESCENT, CALCULATE OUR RATE IN FEET PER MINUTE, AND CONVERT THAT INTO MILES PER HOUR.
THAT SOUNDS LIKE MATH.
UM, YES.
SUDDENLY I STOPPED CARING.

Garfield®

By Jim Davis


SOME MORNINGS I DON'T FEEL LIKE GETTING OUT OF BED
ESPECIALLY WHEN I'VE SLEPT ON MY TAIL AND CAN'T MOVE WITHOUT SCREAMING
JIM DAVIS 1-16

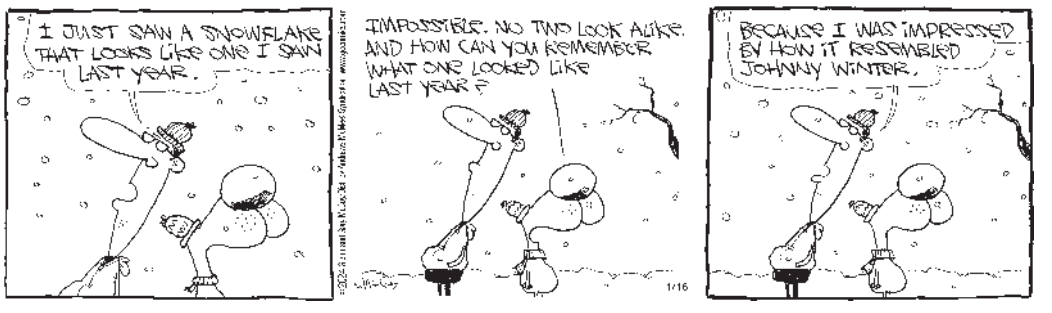
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

WELL, THIS MAY BE A DREAM, BUT WE SHOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IT.
LET ME SEE IF I CAN FLY.
DANG. NOPE.
ANY OTHER IDEAS?
I'VE BEEN WANTING TO CHECK OUT THAT CASINO BY THE HIGHWAY.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


I JUST SAW A SNOWFLAKE THAT LOOKS LIKE ONE I SAW LAST YEAR.
IMPOSSIBLE. NO TWO LOOK ALIKE. AND HOW CAN YOU REMEMBER WHAT ONE LOOKED LIKE LAST YEAR?
BECAUSE I WAS IMPRESSED BY HOW IT RESEMBLED JOHNNY WINTER.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Forum wear
5 Recycling container
8 Medics
12 Bard's river
13 Jargon suffix
14 Vicinity
15 Owing nothing
17 PC picture
18 Singer DiFranco
19 Hwy.
20 Delete
21 Homer's lament
22 Layer
23 Honey bunch?
26 Brewed beverages
30 C&W legend McEntire
31 Cutting tool
32 Tennis score
33 Coastal barrier
35 "Treasure" singer Mars
36 James Bond, for one
37 "Delicious!"
38 Make by hand
41 Part of MPH
42 Twisty turn
45 Half (Pref.)
46 Soothing words
48 Sharif of "Funny Girl"
49 Last (Abbr.)
50 Mete (out)
51 South —
52 Fluffy neckpiece
53 Now, on a memo

DOWN
1 "I did it!"
2 It takes the cake
3 Asian desert
4 Industrious insect
5 Docking place
6 "Understood"
7 Born abroad?
8 Milk producer
9 Killer whale
10 Corp. leaders
11 Logical
16 Gift tag word
20 Seasonal helper
21 Attracts criticism
22 "Wham!"
23 Yearbook gp.
24 Pint-sized
25 Lawyers' org.
26 Baseball's Ripken
27 College URL ender
28 Aachen article
29 — -Cat
31 Devious
34 Likely
35 Lancaster or Reynolds
37 Gossip
38 Karate blow
39 San —, Italy
40 Lawyer Clooney
41 Casual shirt
42 Cupid's alias
43 Actress Ward
44 Dance move
46 Name
47 Rx overseer

Solution time: 22 mins.

A	V	A			M	G	S		V	E	R	G
P	E	N	D		O	U	T		O	V	A	L
P	F	N	A		F	R	A		I	F	N	T
T	R	A	Y	S		U	R	D	U			
			O	H	O		S	F	N	S	F	D
P	E	R	F	O	R	M		S	T	I	L	E
A	I	A	S		B	F	G		F	T	O	N
P	I	P	E	R		G	E	N	E	S	I	S
A	S	T	R	O	S		O	F	R			
			V	O	T	E		W	I	D	T	R
T	O	N	I		C	V	A		N	A	S	A
A	I	F	C		K	F	N		G	I	A	M
M	E	T	E		E	N	D			Y	U	P

Yesterday's answer 1-16

1	2	3	4	■	5	6	7	■	8	9	10	11
12				■	13				14			
15				16				■	17			
18			■	19				■	20			
■	■	■	21			■	22			■	■	■
23	24	25			■	26				27	28	29
30				■	31			■	32			
33				34				35				
■	■	■	36			■	37			■	■	■
38	39	40			■	41			■	42	43	44
45				■	46				47			
48					49			■	50			
51				■	52				53			

STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Max Joseph, 42; Richard T. Jones, 52; Debbie Allen, 74; John Carpenter, 76.

Happy Birthday: Establish what you want to accomplish and start moving toward your goal. Stay focused on your objective, and sidestep any emotional roadblocks you encounter. The quickest route is the one with no distractions. An ambitious mindset, high energy and broad vision will lead to positive changes this year. Do the math before you get involved in a financial deal, joint venture or emotional spending. Your numbers are 6, 14, 21, 29, 32, 43, 48.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19)*: Don't act prematurely or jump to conclusions. Sort through your options and spend more time honing your skills, preparing for what you want to do next and making improvements that make you feel confident and good about yourself. Learn from what you experience and move along. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20)*: A change of heart will point you in a much better direction. Be open to suggestions, but take the path that soothes your soul and encourages you to learn and expand your interests. Someone you encounter will offer an interesting perspective on new possibilities. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20)*: Get out and mingle. Mix business with pleasure. A chance to get to know someone better will change how you feel. Don't take a risk with your health or reputation. Listen, observe and reveal what's necessary. Let go of people who don't respect you. ✪✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22)*: Keep your emotions tucked away. Observe what others are doing while you figure out your next move. When the time is right, reach out to people who can help you get things done. A partnership will face problems if honesty is lacking. ✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22)*: Get together with friends or do something that lifts your spirits or motivates you to look and feel your best. Don't overreact if someone decides to make a change that leaves you questioning what to do next. Don't feel obligated to follow others. ✪✪✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22)*: Take the initiative to bring about change. Handling domestic matters will prove valuable when you have a deadline or work from home. Discipline will pay off and allow you to spend more time on personal growth, self-improvement and upgrading your skills. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22)*: Keep your thoughts to yourself. Sharing too much information will leave you open to criticism. Concentrate on your needs, appearance, feelings and the personal changes you want to pursue. Don't let anxiety set in because someone is misleading or manipulating you; say no. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21)*: Take an interest in what's happening around you. Share ideas with people who can bring about change. An interesting partnership will help you develop something you want to pursue. Use your imagination, but don't wander off track. Keep your overhead low and your hopes high. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21)*: Take care of sensitive domestic issues. Implement a lifestyle adjustment that will make your everyday routine simple. Take a unique approach to how you conduct business transactions. An opportunity will sprout if you participate in an event. ✪✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19)*: If you reveal too much, you'll be vulnerable. Let others do the talking; listen, and you'll gain insight into how to get the most out of something you want to pursue. Alter your living space to suit your needs. ✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18)*: Be forthright about money, intentions and feelings. Don't let a change someone makes alter your plans. Be true to yourself and honest with others, and you'll ward off blame for a misunderstanding or poor decisions that you or someone close to you makes. ✪✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20)*: Place your focus where it belongs, and don't stop until you reach your objective. You have the skills to make things happen if you are diligent and stay true to yourself. Refuse to let outside influences take over. Choose the path that soothes your soul. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are focused, productive and imaginative. You are receptive and helpful.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

1		3	5					
2	4		8	1				5
		5					8	1
7	3	8	9	2	5	1	4	6
					8		2	7
		2	7		1	8		
		9	1			5	6	
	6		3			7	1	
8				5	2		3	

Difficulty: ★★ 1/16

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

7	5	1	3	9	8	6	2	4
6	9	8	2	4	5	1	7	3
3	2	4	1	6	7	9	8	5
4	8	2	7	3	6	5	1	9
1	6	5	9	2	4	8	3	7
9	7	3	8	5	1	2	4	6
5	1	6	4	8	3	7	9	2
2	4	7	5	1	9	3	6	8
8	3	9	6	7	2	4	5	1

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Difficulty: ★ 1/16

WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

FRESHLY SQUEEZED ORANGE JUICE **Solution: 8 letters**

O	F	M	C	F	R	E	S	H	R	E	C	I	U	J
R	I	U	I	C	A	R	A	P	L	A	N	T	S	A
A	N	I	T	H	O	L	B	A	R	S	N	M	L	R
N	E	C	R	E	V	R	E	S	E	I	D	S	I	S
G	T	L	U	E	T	U	H	C	M	E	T	E	C	E
E	F	A	S	A	L	A	D	A	T	N	A	Z	E	T
N	O	C	C	O	R	A	T	A	A	A	N	T	S	S
I	S	T	R	A	W	I	R	D	N	V	G	S	G	A
T	P	L	U	P	V	T	I	P	G	E	E	A	N	T
N	B	E	O	M	N	X	I	A	E	L	L	F	I	E
E	A	M	P	E	O	T	D	E	R	Z	O	K	S	T
M	K	E	C	I	C	N	E	P	I	R	E	A	S	A
E	E	N	T	H	O	R	G	A	N	I	C	E	E	L
L	O	N	E	S	S	E	L	D	E	E	S	R	R	O
C	A	R	B	O	H	Y	D	R	A	T	E	B	D	F

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Antioxidants, Bake, Bars, Breakfast, Calcium, Cara, Carbohydrate, Chute, Citrus, Clementine, Concentrated, Dressings, Fine, Folate, Freeze, Fresh, Halves, Jars, Juicer, Melt, Navel, Orange, Organic, Peel, Pitcher, Plant, Pour, Pulp, Ripen, Salad, Seedless, Seeds, Serve, Slice, Soften, Spritz, Straw, Tangelo, Tangerine, Tarocco, Taste, Vitamin

Yesterday's Answer: Sports

To purchase **THE COLLECTED WONDERWORD, Volumes 56 through 76,** order on line at www.WonderWordBooks.com. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

Packers pull wild-card stunner, beat the Cowboys, 48-32

AP

Green Bay Packers quarterback Jordan Love (10) reacts after throwing a touchdown pass against the Dallas Cowboys during the second half of an NFL football game, Sunday, Jan. 14, 2024, in Arlington, Texas.

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP)—Aaron Jones grew up idolizing Emmitt Smith and the Dallas Cowboys.

The Green Bay running back found a new, and most painful, way to torment the all-time rushing leader's former team.

Jones ran for three touchdowns, Jordan Love threw for three more in his postseason debut, Darnell Savage returned an interception 64 yards for a score and the Packers handed the Cowboys their first home loss since the 2022 opener in a 48-32 wild-card stunner Sunday.

"This was my dad's team," Jones, who shared a moment with Smith before the game and now has 488 yards in four career games against the Cowboys, said of his late father. "You always want to be like your father, so that's how it became my team. Dallas is a special place to me, so it's a full-circle moment. It feels like home."

Even against a team that had won 16 consecutive home games.

Green Bay (10-8) will visit top-seeded San Francisco in the divisional round next weekend.

Dak Prescott threw two interceptions before three mostly empty touchdown passes in another playoff flop for him and the No. 2 seed Cowboys (12-6).

The first home loss for the Cowboys since now-retired Tom Brady and Tampa Bay beat them 16 months ago was also the most points the franchise has allowed in a postseason game. The previous high was 38.

The Cowboys, who haven't reached an NFC championship game since the most recent of their five Super Bowl titles 28 years ago, didn't trail by more than eight points at AT&T Stadium this season before falling behind 27-0 in the first half.

The loss will raise questions about the future of Dallas coach Mike McCarthy after the Cowboys lost their playoff opener at home for the second time in three postseasons under the former Green Bay coach.

Dallas is the first team to win at least 12 games in three consecutive playoff seasons without making a conference title game.

The Cowboys surged to the NFC East title in the final two weeks and had a chance to be home at least twice this postseason. Instead, they head into a suddenly uncertain offseason.

"Just shocked, honestly," Prescott said. "From the beginning of the game, we got beat. There's no which way around it. There's no way to sugar coat it. Shock."

Romeo Doubs had a career-high 151 yards receiving a week after being hospitalized with a chest injury as the Packers rolled after finishing the regular season 6-2 to grab the NFC's final playoff spot.

"We came in here with a mindset of we're going to dominate," Love said. "A lot of people were counting us out, and we didn't care about that."

The Packers have never lost in six trips to AT&T Stadium—including the Super Bowl over Pittsburgh during the 2010 season. They now have two playoff victories over the Cowboys after Aaron Rodgers led a 34-31 divisional win when Dallas was the NFC's top seed in 2016, Prescott's rookie year.

Those Packers let a 21-3 lead slip away. These Packers, with the four-time MVP's successor, left little doubt with a 48-16 fourth-quarter lead before two late Dallas TDs.

"We knew it would take time," said Jones, who was a high school and college standout in the far West Texas city of El Paso. "You would hear me during the season and other players (say), we were right there, we're right there, we're right there. We've been able to get over that hump."

Facing the NFL's fifth-best defense, Green Bay matched its Super Bowl-winning team from 2010 for the most points in a playoff game. That was also on the road, a 48-21 victory at top-seeded Atlanta in the divisional round.

Doubs, who returned to the Green Bay sideline after his hospital trip before the end of last week's 17-9 home victory over Chicago that secured a playoff spot, had 102 yards at halftime. It was seven more than the second-year player's previous best.

First-half catches of 22, 26 and 39 yards helped get Love going, and the fourth-year QB finished 16 of 21 for 272 yards as the Packers scored touchdowns on six of their first seven offensive possessions in their highest-scoring game since 2014.

One of them was set up by Prescott's first interception at the Dallas 19-yard line, from Jaire Alexander after he was questionable coming in when he sprained an ankle during the week.

A 46-yard grab by Doubs early in the second half helped finish off the Cowboys after they had scored 10 points on either side of the break. Doubs, Luke Musgrave and Dontayvion Wicks had TD catches.

Jones rushed for 118 yards, putting him over the century mark in all four career games against the Cowboys with nine touchdowns.

"That was fun," said Green Bay coach Matt LaFleur, who took over in 2019 after McCarthy was fired during the 2018 season. "To put on a performance like that. Couldn't be happier for them."

The crowd under the retractable roof on a frigid day in the Dallas area had already been stone-cold silenced when Prescott tried to throw a slant to top receiver CeeDee Lamb.

Savage, who went without an interception in the regular season for the first time in his five-year career, stepped in front and run untouched for a 27-0 lead with 1:50 left before halftime.

"They were mad at me 'cause I wasn't celebrating afterward," Savage said. "I was like, 'We gotta keep playing. But it was definitely a momentum swing in the game, I think."

Prescott finished 41 of 60 for 403 yards, with all three of his touchdowns to tight end Jake Ferguson.

LIONS 24, RAMS 23

DETROIT (AP)—Jared Goff lifted his arms in the air, encouraging Ford Field fans to get even louder, before taking the final snap to end his long-suffering franchise's skid in the playoffs.

The crowd delivered, approaching the decibel level of a siren.

Goff came through, too.

Goff threw for a touchdown and completed a pass for a victory-sealing first down against the team that cast him away, and the Detroit Lions won a playoff game for the first time in 32 years, beating Matthew Stafford and the Los Angeles Rams 24-23 on Sunday night.

The Lions (13-5) ended a nine-game postseason losing streak—the longest in NFL history—that dated to a victory over Dallas on Jan. 5, 1992. They lost a home playoff game two years later and hadn't hosted one since.

"It means a whole lot to this city," Goff said. "We knew what it meant when this season started to get into the playoffs and then to get this win. And, you know, it's just the beginning for us. We've got some run left."

Detroit, the NFC's No. 3 seed, will have two home playoff games for the first time in franchise history, hosting either Tampa Bay or Philadelphia in the divisional round next Sunday. Second-seeded Dallas was routed by Green Bay.

The Rams (10-8) had a chance to take the lead late in the fourth quarter, but Detroit's defense denied them. A holding penalty pushed Los Angeles out of field goal range, and Stafford—the Lions' longtime quarterback who won a Super Bowl after he was traded to the Rams—threw incomplete on fourth down.

On the first play after the two-minute warning, Goff hit Amon-Ra St. Brown for 11 yards, allowing the Lions to run out the clock—much to the delight of long-suffering fans who witnessed the franchise's second postseason victory since winning the 1957 NFL title.

"That's the best home atmosphere I've ever played in, and I expect next week will top that," Goff said.

Against the franchise he once led to the Super Bowl, Goff was 22 of 27 for 277 yards and threw a 2-yard touchdown pass to rookie tight end Sam LaPorta that put Detroit ahead 21-10 midway through the second quarter.

The Lions acquired Goff and a pair of first-round picks for Stafford three years ago.

"Jared was really efficient. You could see the command that he has," said Rams coach Sean McVay, whose relationship with Goff soured before the trade. "There's a lot made of it, but I'm really happy for him. We wanted to come away with a win, but he's done a great job."

Stafford, who played most of the game with a bandaged and bloody hand after he slammed it into a defender's helmet, finished 25 of 36 for 367 yards with two touchdowns.

"I wouldn't want anyone else as our quarterback other than Matthew Stafford," McVay said. "He was outstanding. He was gritty. He was gutsy and made tough throw after tough throw. The rush was barreling down on him, and he stood in there and was dropping dimes all day."

Detroit drafted Stafford No. 1 overall in 2009 and while he put up gaudy statistics, he didn't win a playoff game in his 12 seasons. Stafford hugged dozens of Detroit's players and staff members after the game.

"I'm happy for the players," he said. "I'm happy for those guys."

Record-breaking rookie Puka Nacua had nine receptions for 181 yards and a touchdown for the Rams.

David Montgomery and rookie Jahmyr Gibbs each had a rushing TD for the Lions, and St. Brown had seven receptions for 110 yards.

After trailing by 11 points, the Rams got within 21-17 at halftime thanks to Stafford's 50-yard touchdown pass to Nacua and his 38-yarder to Tutu Atwell.

Michael Badgley's season-long, 54-yard field goal—the longest of his postseason career, and tied for the longest in Detroit's playoff history—gave the Lions a seven-point lead midway through the third quarter.

The Rams moved the ball at will for much of the game, but had to settle for short field goals by Brett Maher to get within 24-23 with 8:10 remaining.

"The difference in the game was the red area," McVay said.

Stafford has made a career of fourth-quarter comebacks, a fact the fans at Ford Field were well aware of. With a chance to put the Rams ahead for the first time, he led a drive to the Detroit 34, but the Lions' defense forced him backwards from there.

Detroit took over with 4:07 to go, and Los Angeles had only one timeout left after calling two earlier in the half to cope with the crowd noise. That allowed Goff to take a knee after his throw to St. Brown.

The Lions started strong and looked as fired up as their long-suffering fans, with rapper and Motor City native Eminem in the house along with Hall of Famers Barry Sanders and Calvin Johnson.

"When we came out for pregame warmups, it was already buzzing," Campbell said.

The fans showered Stafford with boos when he ran onto the field, where he posed for a pregame photo with his wife and their daughters, and chanted "Jar-ed Goff! Jar-ed Goff" for the Lions' quarterback.

"Going into this game, I had two things I was playing for: I was playing for my teammates and I was playing for the city," said Hutchinson, who grew up in suburban Detroit and starred at Michigan. "This city has been so deserving of this for so long, and we're going to keep it up."

Lillard hits 3-pointer at OT buzzer to lift Bucks past Kings

MILWAUKEE (AP)—Damian Lillard made a 3-pointer at the buzzer in overtime to give the Milwaukee Bucks a 143-142 victory over the Sacramento Kings on Sunday night.

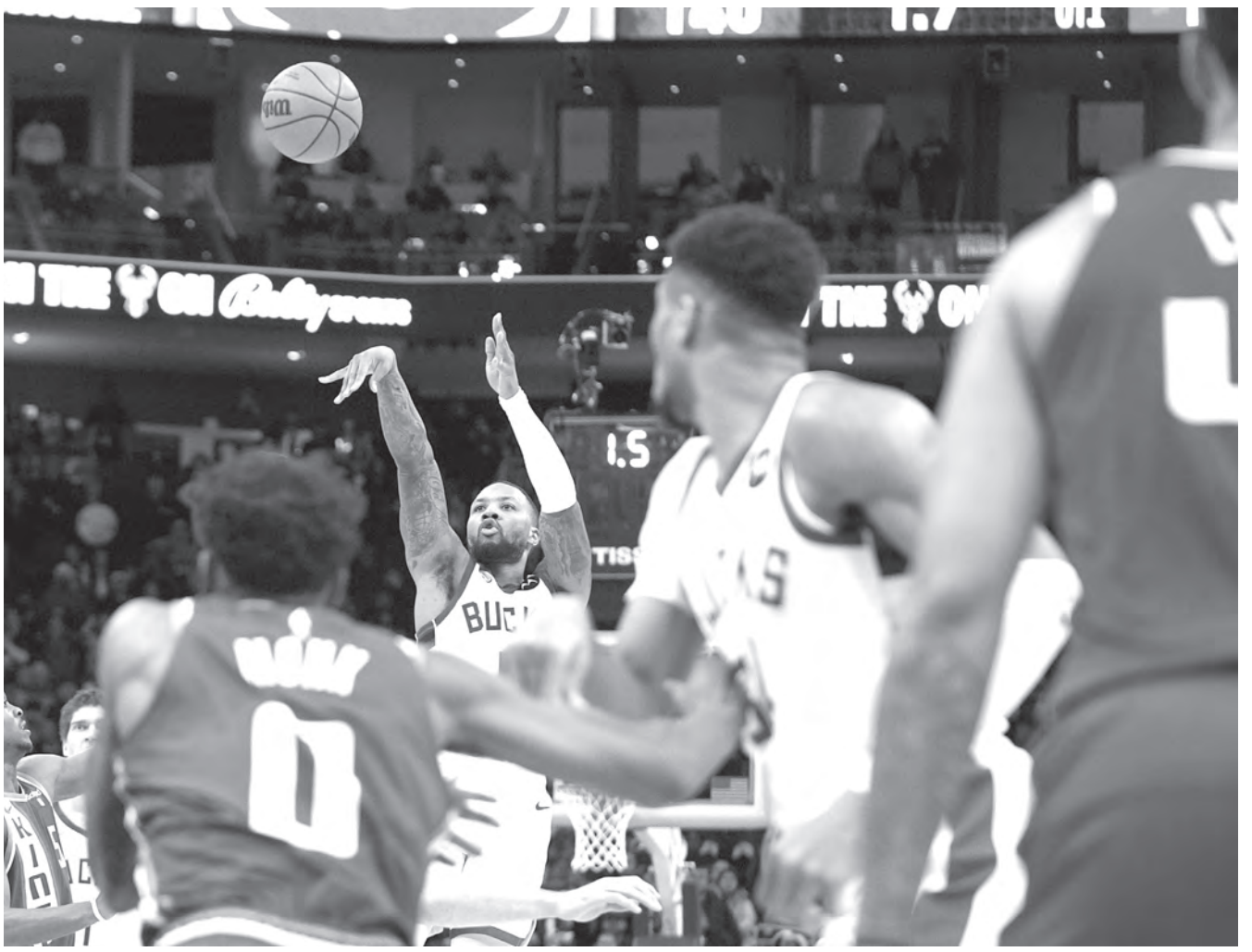
The Kings led by four late in overtime, but Brook Lopez made a 3-pointer from the corner to pull the Bucks to 141-140 with 11.5 seconds remaining.

De'Aaron Fox made one of two free throws before Lillard received a pass, dribbled across half court and sank the shot that gave the Bucks their 15th consecutive victory over the Kings.

Lillard led Milwaukee with 29 points. Giannis Antetokounmpo had a triple-double with 27 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists, Malik Beasley scored 23 points and Bobby Portis added 22. The Bucks improved to 19-3 at home.

Fox finished with 32 points to lead the Kings, and Domantas Sabonis had his 10th triple-double of the season with 21 points, 15 assists and 13 rebounds.

Kings coach Mike Brown stormed onto the court with 9:27 left in the fourth and began screaming at referee Intae Hwang and was immediately ejected while having to be restrained by Sacramento players. Malik Monk wrapped his arms around Brown and directed him off the court.



AP

Milwaukee Bucks' Damian Lillard puts up the game-winning three pointer during overtime of an NBA basketball game against the Sacramento Kings Sunday, Jan. 14, 2024, in Milwaukee.

TIMBERWOLVES 109, CLIPPERS 105

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—Anthony Edwards scored 20 of his 33 points in the third quarter and Rudy Gobert had 15 points and 18 rebounds to help Minnesota beat Los Angeles.

Norman Powell's corner 3-pointer—his sixth of the game—capped a 20-6 surge by the Clippers over a four-plus-minute stretch that sliced their deficit to 103-100. Gobert, who missed seven free throws including earlier back-to-back airballs, made four foul shots in the final minute to nudge the Wolves to the finish line on a night when they had 19 turnovers and allowed 37 points in the fourth quarter.

Karl-Anthony Towns scored 17 points for the West-leading Wolves (28-11), who held Clippers stars Paul George (16 points) and James Harden (14 points) to a combined 9-for-33 shooting from the floor. The Wolves, who lead the NBA in scoring defense, are 16-2 at home and 20-6 against their conference.

Kawhi Leonard had 26 points and nine rebounds for the Clippers (25-14), They have won 17 of their last 21 games.

NUGGETS 117, PACERS 109

DENVER (AP)—Nikola Jokic had 25 points, 12 rebounds and nine assists, finishing an assist shy of his 13th triple-double of the season in Denver's victory over Indiana.

Michael Porter Jr. and Jamal Murray matched Jokic with 25 points apiece for the Nuggets, who shot a season-high 64.8% from the field. Aaron Gordon added 20 points and 10 rebounds to help defending champion Denver improve to 17-4 at home.

Jokic made 12 of his 13 field-goal attempts. The two-time NBA MVP is shooting 81% from the field over his past nine games.

Former Nuggets player Bruce Brown had 18 points, 10 rebounds and six assists for Indiana. The Pacers are 2-2 since losing star Tyrese Haliburton to a strained left hamstring.

Erik Spoelstra's path from Miami Heat video room to a contract like none other

MIAMI (AP)—Erik Spoelstra was hosting a clinic in the Philippines, his mother's homeland, this past summer while the Miami Heat coach was there as an assistant with USA Basketball for the World Cup. A few dozen kids finished the workout, then got to ask him whatever they wanted.

One asked about his longevity with the Heat. Over the next few minutes, Spoelstra talked about friendships, loyalty and how fortunate he is that the Heat—the team he's been with for almost 30 years—value stability.

The latest reminder of all that came Tuesday with Miami signing Spoelstra to a history-making deal spanning eight years and worth roughly $120 million, the biggest contract in terms of total salary ever given to an NBA coach and one that illustrates how vital the Heat believe he is to the operation.

"Pat Riley is a legend in the game," Spoelstra told those kids in Manila, speaking of his longtime boss and the Heat president. "And he believes in loyalty. I probably would have been fired a few times with another organization. So, I'm very grateful for that. We've tried to build a culture of family and a culture where we trust each other, where we're sacrificing for each other and where we're serving each other."

The formula obviously works. Spoelstra guided Heat teams to the playoffs in 12 of his first 15 seasons as coach, getting to the NBA Finals six times—including last season—and winning championships in 2012 and 2013 with teams led by LeBron James, Dwyane Wade and Chris Bosh.

"In this business, you also just want to work with great people that are well-intentioned," Spoelstra said Wednesday. "There's going to be ups and downs in this business. We enjoy the process of trying to do special things. But we enjoy being around each other. And we've had some tough times and tough years and that's when we've really rallied around each other the most. I grew up in the NBA business so I understand how unique that is. And that's why I feel a great responsibility to be a caretaker for this culture, now and moving forward."

Only San Antonio and Boston have won more regular-season games than Miami since Spoelstra took over for Riley in 2008, and no team in that span has won more playoff games. Spoelstra is 19th all-time in regular-season victories (725 entering Wednesday) and fifth in playoff victories (109, not counting a play-in tournament game win last season as well). He'll be an assistant on Steve Kerr's USA Basketball staff that will try to win Olympic gold in Paris this summer and is widely expected to be a top candidate when it's time for the Americans to pick a head coach for the 2028 Los Angeles Games.

"Worth Every Single Cent of that contract!!!" James tweeted on Tuesday.

Wade offered a similar sentiment: "Spo!!!!!!!!! Earned!" he wrote, with eight moneybag emojis in there as well.

Spoelstra's contract was ending after this season, which isn't a good sign in most places. But in Miami, that doesn't mean anything. Contracts for coaches and executives within the organization are hardly ever announced; it's just assumed that everybody stays put year after year.

The names atop the staff directory have barely changed since 1995, and in some cases since the team's inception in 1988. Micky Arison is managing general partner, son Nick Arison is CEO, Riley is president, Andy Elisburg is general manager, Adam Simon is assistant general manager. Elisburg has been there since the first season, along with broadcasters Eric Reid and José Pañeda, team ambassador (and former assistant coach and broadcaster) Tony Fiorentino, chief financial officer Sammy Schulman and vice president of marketing Jeff Craney.

Spoelstra—whose father, Jon Spoelstra, was an NBA executive with Portland, Denver and New Jersey—was a standout high school guard in Oregon, then played at the University of Portland, where he was the West Coast Conference's freshman of the year. After college, he spent two years playing professionally in Germany, before the Heat called with their offer to work at the lowest rung of the organization.

He was 24 then. He's 53 now, his well-chronicled path starting in the video room (Riley didn't know his name at first) to scout to assistant coach to head coach to champion and, surely, a Hall of Famer one day. Jon Spoelstra told his son long ago to not leave the Heat, and the eight-year deal is just another sign of Miami's stability.

"He's precise in what he wants and how he's going to go about doing it," said Orlando coach Jamahl Mosley, who has known Spoelstra for decades and worked with him in recent years with USA Basketball. "The way in which he develops guys, the chemistry that he creates in that culture over there, is at a high level. And the thing that has stood out to me the most is that the stability that he has with that organization, and the support and the trust that he has from top to bottom—and not just with the players. I think that goes such a long way."

Spoelstra starts each day with some quiet meditation, then ends each day by jotting a few notes in a gratitude journal. There's much to be grateful for, he's found, and much of it goes back to the loyalty that is part of the Heat organizational fabric.

Not bad for a guy who, in his own words, didn't know much of anything when he got that video room job in 1995.

"If you talk about stability, every franchise in pro sports throws those kinds of terms—stability and family, consistency, continuity—everybody throws that out there," Spoelstra said. "But very few actually execute it."

SUNS 127, TRAIL BLAZERS 116

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP)—Devin Booker had 34 points and Phoenix held off Portland for its second straight victory.

Bradley Beal added 23 points, Kevin Durant had 21 and Grayson Allen 20. The Suns, whose biggest lead was 17 points, let Portland narrow the gap to four points midway through the final quarter.

Rookie Scoot Henderson had a career-high 33 points and nine assists for the short-handed Trail Blazers. They have lost four straight and eight of 10.

HEAT 104, HORNETS 87

MIAMI (AP)— Bam Adebayo had 24 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists, helping Miami beat Charlotte.

Tyler Herro made four 3-pointers and scored 21 points for Miami. The Heat went 11 for 25 from 3-point range while completing a four-game sweep of the regular-season series against Charlotte. They also won their 22nd straight game at home against Southeast Division opponents.

Terry Rozier scored 26 points for Charlotte. The Hornets have dropped five in a row and 16 of 17.

‘Very busy’ 2023 for CNMI Weightlifting

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

It was a busy but not as fruitful year for CNMI Weightlifting Federation for 2023, according to president John Davis.

At the 2023 Pacific Games in Honiara, Solomon Islands last November, the weightlifting team consisting of six lifters collectively won four medals—with three won by Ray Santos and the other by Leowell Cristobal.

With that, Davis said, “This was a very busy year for us, but we did not end it as successfully as we hoped,” and rated the year as a 7 on a scale of 1-10.

It was indeed a busy year as the federation hosted several events and also had some lifters compete off island as well. Earlier in the year, the federation hosted 20 local weightlifting athletes at the Marianas Barbell Competition at the Gilbert C. Ada Gym last January.

In February, CNMI sent 14 athletes to Guam to compete in the Guam Open National Championships and were successful in snagging some medals.

Then in March, the federation hosted the first quasi-international competition, the 2023 Marianas Weightlifting Cup and competed against Guam lifters also at the Ada Gym.

Heavy lifter Joey Colisao competed in Apia, Samoa last October and became the U23 +109kg champion at the Oceania Weightlifting Championships.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

CNMI weightlifters pose for a photo with Guam weightlifters after the Guam Open National Championships 2023 last March in Guam.

As for highlights, despite a busy year, Davis said, “I’m not sure that CNMI Weightlifting, as a federation, can point to any highlights. Our individual athletes have had some measure of success and for that we are grateful and we congratulate and support them. But our athletes still have no common and identifiable place to train as a cohesive unit.”

He added, “Like other sports entities, we receive absolutely no support from the government, though weightlifting athletes win the majority of CNMI medals at international games.”

With what to look forward to this year, he said they “plan to keep encouraging our current athletes to train and win. We hope to get more youth and junior athletes involved with the sport. And we will keep beating the bushes to get financial and material support for athletes to compete at international events.”

TRIBUTES

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The SSC, meanwhile, said they’ve known about Sakovich’s diagnosis since late last year and were praying for her recovery.

“Jean, Bill, and the family have been in our thoughts since we heard of her illness and retirement from swim coaching. She touched so many lives, she will be missed, and she will be remembered fondly. Saipan Swim Club is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year and it is bittersweet to know Jean won't be there to celebrate with us. Our condolences go out to Bill and the family.”

Fellow Sports Hall of Famer Jeff Race said he was profoundly saddened upon hearing the passing of Sakovich.

“It makes me sad. Jean was a very giving person and spent countless hours developing young swimmers in the NMI. We used to swim out to the tanks, run the hash, and spend holidays together. She will be missed by her family and many of us here on Saipan.

Another Sports Hall of Famer, Kurt Barnes, echoed what Race said.

“She touched the lives of many of the CNMI’s greatest swimmers and was instrumental in raising the awareness of the sport of swimming and swimming skills all across Micronesia and Oceania. An icon for sure... I have tears in my eyes.”

Michael White, former NMSA president and Sports Hall of Fame member, said, “Jean was a true force for NMI swimming, and together with Bill, made our islands a Pacific powerhouse in the sport.”

Wolf Mojica, who along with the Sakoviches helped establish the Tagaman and XTERRA Saipan triathlons, is still at a loss for words following Sakovich’s passing.

“I was terribly saddened to hear about Jean’s passing. She and Bill were the backbone of the Saipan Swim Club. She was also a great supporter of Tagaman and XTERRA as partner to Bill. She was always so active, vibrant, and a swimming icon. She will be missed.”

SSC coach Richard Sikkel said he will forever remember Sakovich as a friend and mentor. “I loved her humor and ability to tell it like it is.”

Not only did her contemporaries paid tribute to Sakovich, but her wards also sent messages of condolences to the coach they simply called “Mrs.”

Multiple Micronesian Games gold medalist Rezne Wong said unknown to many Jean actually was the drillmaster in the SSC.

“We young swimmers always feared if Mrs. was going to coach practice back in the day in the late 1990s-2000s. She was no joke—if you thought coach Bill was intense, you weren't ready for Mrs. Even the parents were scared because she'd make us swim late into the evening. However, looking back as an adult, I respected that she tested our limits as athletes. It helped us in swimming and in life.”

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Kurt Barnes shared this photo with the Sakoviches at the Golden Corral restaurant in 2018. From left, Bill Sakovich, Bill’s sister-in-law Jan, Jean Sakovich, Solita Barnes, Kurt Barnes, and Val Sakovich.

Wong, however, said as he got older, he experienced the very caring and gentle side of Sakovich.

“She hosted me during my freshman year at the University of Hawaii when I visited them in Hilo. She made me feel at home. I began to realize that both Jean and Bill simply loved the sport of swimming and loved us silly kids on Saipan.”

Wong said he and other former SSC swimmers will forever be in debt of the Sakoviches.

“I will always appreciate and honor her dedication, determination, and love for me and my fellow swimmers. My prayers go out to her and her beautiful family. Rest in peace, Mrs!”

Another bemedaled swimmer, Juan Camacho, said the Sakoviches set the standard in the art of coaching for all sports in the CNMI.

“Specifically, in the sport swimming, they have outdone themselves by nurturing, mentoring, and leading its CNMI swimmers. Without a doubt I know that swimming has been overlooked over the years and we need to remember that swimming has brought back the most medals for the CNMI in all Micronesian Games and South Pacific Games combined. Without Mr. and Mrs. Sakovich, the CNMI would not have had a huge success in swimming.”

Camacho said he still cherishes the time when the Sakoviches took him around the island of their new home in Hawaii during his senior trip in high school.

“They took me to their home and still after five years into retirement they were always making sure I had a plan for my future. They are truly one of the idols in my life that has groomed me to be the individual, leader, and family man today. Mr. Sakovich, the CNMI will always be your home, we love and miss you! Condolences, thoughts, prayers to you and the Ohana,” he said.

HESS

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course in the loop at the base of the mountain, but when he reached the mountain road, it was all uphill for him from there—literally.

Hess said this race was way harder than Day 1’s 10K as it’s a steep course, but he managed to pull away from the pack 2 kilometers in.

For student-athlete Taflinger, she said, the race for her was also “exhausting since it was all uphill. I feel like every single time we run Mt. Tapochau, it gets longer.”

She ran with Brennfleck for the first mile and a half, but as they ran up one of the hills, she pulled ahead. It was a grueling race for Taflinger as she felt sore from Day 1’s race and also from playing volleyball, but she still managed to once again lock down first place on Day 2.

On how she kept pushing despite the challenges, she said, “I wanted to keep first place and so I just kept on pushing myself and telling myself that I could do it.” With the final race on Day 3 the next day and also a 6am race, she said, “I’m ready for it, but I feel like it’s going to be really hard since it’s been two days of running. I’m already really exhausted.”

Results of Day 3 at Marpi (5K) and overall/Top 10 runners will be posted in the next issues of *Saipan Tribune*.

LEIGH GASES

Some participants of Day 2 of the Run Saipan 2024 Trinity Race, the Mt. Tapochau 5K, pose for a photo at the finish line on the summit of the mountain last Sunday morning.

BLUE

From page 20

Blue Jays went through the top of their lineup for a second time and scored two more runs.

For the Spartans, they went two scoreless innings against Blue Jays pitcher Kevin Kapileo, and finally tacked on three runs in the third inning. Leadoff batter Isaac Aguon, J.J. Teigita, and Ton Pangelinan went back-to-back-to-back to give them a fighting chance.

By this time however, the Blue Jays’ lead soared to 17-3 from multiple RBI singles from Jun Salalila and Paul Salalila.

The Blue Jays didn’t stop there and added three more runs in the fourth inning for a huge 17-run lead, and the Spartans’ hopes were dashed when their offense could only come up with two more runs in their last chance at-bat to end the game early.

Packers pull wild-card stunner, beat the Cowboys, 48-32.

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Sports

'Very busy' 2023 for CNMI Weightlifting.

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Tributes pour in for Jean Sakovich

By MARK RABAGO
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EDITOR

Saipan Swim Club co-founder and 2004 CNMI Sports Hall of Famer Jean "Jeannie" Sakovich has passed away. In a social post last Dec. 16, she was hospitalized with cancer since Nov. 18.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Jean "Jeannie" Sakovich, standing left, with the CNMI National Swimming Team during the opening ceremony of the 1999 South Pacific Games in Guam.

She is survived by SSC co-founder and fellow Hall of Fame inductee Bill Sakovich, son Jonathan, also a Hall of Famer, and daughter Anneka.

The Northern Marianas Sports Association, in a statement, said it joins the local sports community and the entire Pacific in mourning the passing of Sakovich.

"Jeannie was a pillar in NMI swimming, as she co-founded the Saipan Swim Club with her husband, Bill, in the 1970s. Together, they discovered, developed, and trained swimmers that later on represented the NMI to different regional and international competitions and brought honors to the islands."

NMSA said in 2004, when SSC celebrated its 30th anniversary, the club's co-founders were credited for SSC's combined medal haul of 70 gold, 55 silver, and 50 bronze medals from the Micronesian Games and South Pacific Games (now Pacific Games).

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Saipan Swim Club co-founders and 2004 CNMI Sports Hall of Famers Jean "Jeannie" and Bill Sakovich in this undated social media photo.

"No other sports program than swimming has brought home more medals and championships to the NMI. Under Jeannie and Bill's dedication and commitment to developing NMI swimmers, several of the islands' student-athletes also gained opportunities to pursue higher education through athletics scholarships."

NMSA wishes to express its deepest condolences to the family of Sakovich.

"For more than three decades, Jeannie and her husband, Bill, dedicated their time and efforts to one of the most successful programs in NMI sports. Even after they left Saipan in the early 2000s, they still provided guidance to our swimmers and coaches, especially when they were competing off-island and representing the NMI," it said.

The Northern Mariana Islands Swimming Federation also said it's deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Sakovich.

"Jean was instrumental in advancing aquatics here in the CNMI starting in the 1970s. She, along with her husband Bill, were trailblazers. They started and sustained swimming programs that provided a pathway for many local athletes to not just learn to swim, but compete and perform at the highest levels at home, regionally, and internationally. She will always be remembered for her tireless devotion to NMI swimming and her passion for helping children reach their potential. The NMI swimming community extends our heartfelt condolences to the Sakovich family during this time of loss. RIP Jean!" its board of directors said in a statement.

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Blue Jays fight off Spartans, 20-5

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

The Blue Jays racked up their third win of the season after they fought off the Spartans, 20-5, in the continuation of the 2023 Tan Holdings-SBL Masters League last Thursday at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field.

It was over before it really even started with 11 runs scored right away by the Blue Jays in the first inning. The offensive push was started by leadoff batter Andave Camacho, but they were also assisted throughout the inning by the Spartans' shoddy defense that led to multiple errors.

J-Boy Deleon Guerrero added three runs with a bases-clearing triple to make it 7-0, while the next batter, Ben Pangelinan, hit an RBI-double for an 8-0 game. The inning didn't end until the

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LEIGH GASES

In this file photo, Blue Jays' Paul Salalila gets ready to swing in the batters' box during one of their games in the 2023 Tan Holdings-SBL Masters League at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Baseball Field.

Hess breaks course record on Day 2; Taflinger still No. 1

By LEIGH GASES
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Fighting fatigue/soreness, early morning drowsiness/darkness, and the unforgiving hills of Saipan's highest peak, Swiss visitor Martin Hess still ran it and broke the course record for what most runners said was the hardest course of the Run Saipan 2024 Trinity Race—the Mt. Tapochau 5K course on Day 2.

With the morning sun not even peeking over the eastside horizon yet, the Top 3 runners came bounding into the finish line last Sunday, with Hess clocking in first at an impressive time of 25 minutes flat.

Second to Hess was youngster Victor Neil Santos at 26:28, and third was Sildrey Veloria at 27:08. The Top 3 actually beat last year's inaugural first place time of 31:36 set by runner/cyclist Joel Buco.

In the women's division, 13-year-old Addalee Taflinger outpaced all the other women runners with a time of 33:03; second was Shawna Brennfleck with a time of 33:53; and third was Ann Bang who clocked in at 35:41.

Hess brought his sprinting legs despite being a distance runner and fearlessly scaled the 474 m (1,555 ft.) mountain with relative ease. The loop at the base in Capital Hill may have confused him for a bit, but that didn't deter him from racing up the mountain the fastest and setting a new course record.

He said this second consecutive day of the race was the hardest because he was sore and had initial complications of finding the way through the

See HESS on Page 19

LEIGH GASES

Swiss runner Martin Hess runs into first place and breaks the Mt. Tapochau 5K course record of the Run Saipan Trinity race with a time of 25 minutes flat on Day 2 last Sunday.

LEIGH GASES

Addalee Taflinger secures the top spot in the women's division again on Day 2 of the Run Saipan 2024 Trinity race on Mt. Tapochau last Sunday.